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THE BROTHER AND THE BROTHERHOOD

THE BROTHER

AND

THE BROTHERHOOD

BY

IRA SEYMOUR DODD

Author of "A Lesson from the Upper Room"
"The Song of the Rappahannock," etc.

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TO MY PEOPLE

WHO THROUGH THESE YEARS HAVE BEEN MY
FAITHFUL FRIENDS

THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED

BY THEIR MINISTER

INTRODUCTORY

The Riverdale Presbyterian Church has a character of its own. The picturesque house of worship, built of the gray stone native to the region and now beginning to show the mellowing touch of time, stands embowered amid great trees which are relics of the primeval forest. And yet Riverdale is in and part of New York City.

The membership of the church includes men and women distinguished in the business and philanthropic life of the city; it includes also those people whose homes and work have been for generations in the immediate neighborhood.

The congregation is not large; yet few city churches represent so wide a variety of worldly condition or mental attainment. In the House of God the people meet together in a spirit of brotherhood; there are no rented pews, the

church is like a family, not indeed faultless, but Christian. A pastorate of twenty-five years with such a congregation is a rare privilege.

And now the people ask their minister for a volume of sermons as a memento of his quarter century of service. If others besides those who have already heard them should read these sermons, the author asks a remembrance of their original purpose. They are lessons in the gospel of Christ prepared by a pastor for his people. But the idea which more or less distinctly runs through the series and is suggested by the title reflects a truth of such far-reaching and present-day importance that such studies as these may possibly appeal to a wider audience.

If anything in this book should prove helpful toward a clearer vision of our brother Christ, showing us His Father and ours; if a sharper sense of the duties, or a fresh glimpse of the blessings of Christian and human brotherhood should come to any one, the author will be thankfully content.

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THE BEGINNING OF THE BROTHERHOOD

Again the next day after John stood, and two of his disciples; and looking upon Jesus as He walked, he saith, Behold the Lamb of God!

And the two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus.

Then Jesus turned, and saw them following, and saith unto them, What seek ye? They said unto Him, Rabbi (which is to say, being interpreted, Master), where dwellest Thou?

He saith unto them, Come and see. They came and saw where He dwelt, and abode with Him that day: for it was about the tenth hour.

JOHN i. 35–39.

THE BEGINNING OF THE BROTHERHOOD

The beginning of the gospel of Jesus is the beginning of a story of brotherhood. At the outset of the earthly ministry of the Christ men were drawn to Him in fellowship and He began to share His life with them in friendship.

There is a wondrous charm in the story. It is a poem breathing the profound simplicities of nature and of life.

If we would enter its atmosphere and catch its meaning we must remember that it tells of the coming together of three young men attracted by a mutual enthusiasm. Jesus Himself was young. "He had begun to be about thirty years of age." John was much younger, and Andrew could scarcely have been very different in age from Jesus. Along with the multitude out of all Israel drawn by the soul-stirring message of John the Baptist, they had come to the Jordan.

It was a lonely place. No city, no houses, were near: just the river, with its slightly wooded grassy banks and the bare hills beyond — an out-of-door place and scene. The people who thronged it had come from far. They camped out, they brought their own simple provisions, they lived in tents or in extemporized booths.

The Baptist, whose preaching had brought them together, was more than a stern prophet of righteousness. His denunciations of sin, his call to repentance, had a reason behind them. He was preparing the way for a Coming One. Even when his message was most severe, a great Hope shone through it like a star.

Many — and they the more earnest ones — came to John at the Jordan because they expected the advent of Messiah. The hope in the message answered the hope already burning in their hearts. Among such seekers we must surely place the first disciples.

We call them common men; simple, uneducated fishermen. But have we forgotten

that in the souls of just such men the mighty enthusiasms which have changed the course of history have taken deepest root and brought forth richest fruit? Have we ceased to remember that many noblest saints and heroes have arisen out of the ranks of the lowly born?

But in a true and high sense these men were not uneducated. Not only had they drunk deep of that purest fountain of truest culture, the Word of God in Holy Scripture, but their minds had been exercised by strong thinking about great things. From their standpoint the coming of Messiah was an event which must touch every social and political, as well as every religious, question of the stirring age in which they lived. To say that John and Andrew were young men fired by a Messianic enthusiasm is to say that they were young men fired with an enthusiasm which necessarily aroused and quickened all their intellectual and spiritual powers. In the perfection of His nature Jesus was indeed infinitely above His disciples; yet between Him and them there was the common standing ground of mutual

interests and true sympathies which made fellowship both possible and real.

Another thing we must keep in mind if we would appreciate this story. We must remember that it is reminiscence. An old man recalls the most precious moments of his youth.

Like a deathless, unfading picture, that never-to-be-forgotten day lives in the memory of the Beloved Disciple, who is now the aged Apostle, — that day when in the first flush of manhood he stood with Jesus beside the shore of Jordan. He feels again the hot sunshine and the warm desert air flowing down from the brown hills. As though it were yesterday, he sees the hitherto unpeopled valley filled with crowds flocking to the preaching of the Desert Prophet. Once more the heart-clutch of that moment comes when the Baptist with whom he is walking stops, stretches out his sinewy, naked arm, points to the young Nazarene, and says: "Behold the Lamb of God!"

The leap of fulfilled hope thrills his breast; and, not as though it were yesterday, but as though it were rushing afresh upon him at the

moment, he feels the strange, the irresistible attraction which instantly drew him and Andrew away from the old Master to the side of the New.

He sees Jesus turn and look upon him. Oh that face! Through the long years it has been to him more real, more dear, than any face of man. And the voice, which in sudden question shook his very soul! Yet John knows, — he vividly remembers how, overleaping even awe or reverence, a new-born love sprang up within him casting out fear, demanding fellowship as he answered:

"Master, where dwellest Thou?" "Where dwellest Thou? for we cannot leave you; we must stay by you; we are going home with you."

Even yet the frank and manly welcome of the response lingers. Jesus says, "Come and ye shall see"; and the comradeship is sealed. Together the three young men thread their way through crowded groups until they reach the rude booth by the river side; and if either John or Andrew had at first thought of a brief,

respectful visit the thought is quickly lost in the discovery that they have found, not only a Christ, but a Friend.

There under the leafy boughs, while turbid Jordan rolls at their feet, they abide with Jesus; the moments fly unheeded while they sit together in sweet communion until the sun goes down and evening shadows deepen.

John was young then, scarce twenty years of age. Now he is old. He has become "The Venerable," and, it may be, the very last man living on earth who has seen Jesus face to face. But that day by the river side where he and Andrew abode with Jesus, was the bright beginning of a friendship which has never ceased, which has grown deeper, richer, more real as the years have gone by.

Perhaps there was never on earth a communion so perfect as that of the Beloved Disciple with his Master; yet it differed only in degree from that which all the disciples experienced. No brotherhood could be more beautiful than that of Jesus and the Twelve; and never had any brotherhood such significance.

At the beginning, before a single mighty work, before the first utterance of the teaching with authority, immediately following the proclamation of the Lamb of God, as a first result of the proclamation of the Christ a communion forms itself: it flows together inevitably, naturally, as though it were in itself a manifestation of Christhood.

The mission of the Christ begins with Communion.

But lest any might imagine this an accident, or merely a prelude to affairs more important, we behold at the close of the ministry of Jesus that Last Supper whose bread and wine becomes the symbol of His life given in love for His friends; and we see communion raised into the place of the highest, holiest sign of the Christian faith, — the sacrament which above all else represents the life of the Church of Jesus! Surely there must be a meaning in this! And there is. The earthly ministry of Jesus began and ended in communion, because the communion of brotherhood enfolds the very core of His gospel.

Communion is the sharing by kindred natures of what belongs to each of them in common.

And the great word of the gospel of Jesus is, *Father!* "Your Father which is in heaven."

The Fatherhood of God was, to Jesus, no abstract proposition, nor any legal fiction, nor any hazy religious sentiment. In the sight of Jesus the bond of nature between man and God was a living fact. The confession of this bond by men, with the communion of spirit and the fellowship of life implied in it, was the need of needs involving the issue of life or death, salvation or perdition.

For, Jesus beheld men, like the younger son in His great parable, repudiating their Father in their lives; or like the elder son repudiating their Father in their hearts. Therefore His gospel is a call to repentance, commanding men to turn from the sin that is both crime against the Father and death to their own souls, since it breaks the bond which unites them to their true and only life.

But the gospel of Jesus speaks not in His words alone. Above any uttered word it speaks in the very Person of Him who is at once God's Well Beloved Son and our Brother. The communion of brotherhood in which Jesus lived with His disciples was the expression of His nature in His daily life.

Moreover, it is a concrete witness to the truth of the kinship between the human and the divine. The loving fellowship between Jesus and His disciples leads straight from Himself up to the Father. It becomes an object lesson given by our great Brother to His little brothers, teaching the first principles of the life of the Family to which we belong.

But words when applied to such great simplicities as the living gospel of Jesus are poor and often misleading. To name the fellowship of Jesus with His disciples "an object lesson" or "an example" is to risk suspicion of unreality, because the notion of example too easily runs into the notion of some decorous, unnatural stiffness of conscious effort. And the risk is greater because the idea of conscious effort

for effect readily falls in with the religiously conventional idea of a "proper" Christ condescending to those with whom He can have nothing naturally in common.

We must cleanse our minds of all such foolishness and falseness if we would understand Him.

Jesus was too great and too greatly human to allow any compromise of His humanity by His official dignities.

It may help us if we return and look once more upon the picture of the first communion of the disciples with their Master, remembering that the picture is a reminiscence.

Sixty or more epoch-making years have passed away. The earlier simplicities have become somewhat clouded by the growing greatness of the official Christ. Already men are debating the mysteries of His Person. John himself in his old age has become a Personage, last and chiefest of apostles.

If, then, the reminiscence is not colored by the years through which it is projected, nor by John's environment; if the enlarged impres-

sion of the dignity of the Christ does not shadow his picture of Jesus; if we can detect neither any note of wonder at the condescension of the Christ nor any shade of gratulation over the honor conferred on Himself, — then there must be a mighty reason for it. Upon the memory of those hours by the river side, the indelible stamp of genuineness is too deep to permit even suggestion of a communion filtered through the medium of a gracious condescension.

The picture in the mind of John is the picture of a comradeship, and it glows with the genuineness of life. Through it all we feel the warm radiance of a true, honest, manly companionship, friendship, fellowship. Is the Christ lost sight of? The official Christ, perhaps. But the real Christ dominates the picture, and the very crown of His Christhood is Brotherhood.

If we could but clear our vision of cobwebs we should see that Jesus did not have to stoop to fellowship with His disciples. The instinct of brotherhood was an integral part of His

Christhood; the sense of kinship between their souls and His was sweet to Him. He craved their companionship with a craving deeper than they could know, because His was a perfect human nature. He did not stoop to them, He lifted them up to His own heart.

It was not always easy; they often failed to understand. Like later disciples in after ages, their littleness cheapened the bond. Things which might come out of the fellowship — things for themselves — blurred its preciousness. Peter presumed upon the personal importance which it seemed to give him. Even John, the Beloved, wove out of his intimacy with the Christ the glittering fabric of a daringly ambitious dream. All the disciples were touched with a consciousness of the probable advantage of their association with the coming Christ. And like others who have come after them, they had their doubts, their fears, their stupidities.

How beautiful the patience of Jesus with the faulty fellowship of His brethren! But its real beauty is its strength. It is the pa-

tience of a conquering love constantly, surely lifting them into likeness with Himself. We begin to see the power of it while He was with them in the growth of that personal affection for their Master which more than once saved their faith from shipwreck; but its full power was only felt afterward, when their Lord had been taken from them. Then they began to understand. Then, Spirit taught, they discovered that the real blessing of His Christhood had been hidden in their companionship with His very Self, and now it was revealing itself in a communion with the Father, into which the heart of their Brother had raised them.

And then they began to comprehend that His fellowship with them was but the seed from which a mighty harvest should ripen, even the brotherhood which no man can number, out of all nations and kindreds and tongues, confessing the communion with the Father into which Christ has raised them, proclaiming in hymn of mighty unison, "Salvation unto our God which sitteth upon the throne and unto the Lamb!"

But this brings us face to face with Christ upon the Cross. There we see Brotherhood rising to its highest height, reaching to its deepest depth. We behold the Christ who craved fellowship with men in life claiming fellowship with men in their common lot of death, yea, even in their doom of the death which came by sin.

And as we gaze upon Him, numbered for our sake with the transgressors, perhaps we wonder how the Holy Christ could condescend to such a death for the sake of such sinners as ourselves.

But if we understand, this passing wonder will be quickly lost in the more real vision of a Christ whose conquering love makes Him great enough to be the Brother of men in their extremest need, even to the bearing in His own body of the awful load of human grief and human guilt.

Such a Christ is too mighty for Death to hold. The powers of Life Eternal are in Him. And as He rises above vanquished death, His conquering love becomes more and

more resplendent. He raises up with Himself those for whom He gave Himself in sacrifice, and makes them sit together with Him in the heavenly places of fellowship with God.

In those hours at the Last Supper, whose shadows were shot through with the glow of communion, the disciples told Jesus their perplexities, and, as friends in dear fellowship with their great Friend, they asked questions.

Philip, faintly understanding what Jesus had just said, exclaimed:

"Lord, show us the Father and it sufficeth us!" and Jesus answered:

"Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? He that hath seen me hath seen the Father."

Yes! He who sees Jesus as Philip saw Him, not with casual curious glance, nor with detached critical inspection, but in *fellowship* by day and by night, he hath seen the Father.

"Have I been so long time with you, Philip?" Jesus counts the days from the day following the one by the river side, when Andrew found Philip and brought Him to

Jesus, down to the present precious moment. He knows that Philip too is counting them, and that Philip's heart is wrung by the thought of parting with his Lord, who through all the long time has been also his comrade and closest Friend. Jesus appeals to the tried intimacy between them.

Reading between the lines we hear Jesus saying to His disciple, "The fellowship which so long time you and I have lived in is not only like, but it is itself the very fellowship of the Father come down to you in me, your Brother and His Son."

We see the Father when we come into communion with Jesus.

Too often the love of God is represented as though it were some pale reflection of a far-off benevolence, or perhaps as though it were the easy good nature of a carelessly indulgent governor of the Universe. But the love of God is the love of a *Father*.

Now, a Father's love demands response; it asks for confession of kinship, and for fellowship of life on the part of the Father's children.

A Father's love reaches after reality in communion. His own heart can be satisfied with nothing less, His wisdom knows that this alone is life for His children.

The presence of His Christ in the flesh, in the midst of humanity, is God's declaration of Himself to men. It also reveals us to ourselves, for our Brother Jesus is God's Son!

The reality of the fellowship of Jesus with His disciples and His friends, the genuineness of His comradeship, His craving of their company, His deep joy in every response of their love to His brotherly heart, is, all of it, the call of the Father for communion with His children. And for us the way of response must be found in tracing the path of communion made for us by the footsteps of Jesus. The things He cared for, the things He did, His thoughts, His ways are the ways of the Family to which we belong.

When we follow Jesus in the sincerity of an honest fellowship, then we answer the call of our Father's heart.

THE REALITY IN GOD AND IN MAN

God is a Spirit : and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth.—John iv. 24.

WHETHER we regard this word of Jesus as theology or philosophy, or as simple religion, it is most profound. It goes to the very foundation of the nature of God; it reflects a wonderful light upon the nature of man and upon the relation which exists between man and God.

But scarcely less remarkable than the word itself is the way in which it was spoken.

Such a declaration as this would seem suitable for the consideration of a company of learned rabbis or the attention of some circle of eminent philosophers.

To no such assembly of trained and cultured minds does Jesus speak. His only audience was one poor woman, — the woman of Samaria. Look at her as she listens to this greatest of the great words of Jesus! She is ignorant. She could scarcely read the simplest sentence in the Bible, or write her own name. She is coarse

and common; her thoughts run in a narrow circle bounded by her life of rude, daily labor and the crude notions of the petty village community of which she forms an insignificant and not very desirable part. Except for a certain shrewd, half animal quick-wittedness she is repulsive rather than interesting, and she bears the mark of loose and immoral living.

According to the received ideas of the fitness of things, nothing could be more unsuitable than the conduct of Jesus in addressing such profound doctrine to such a person as the woman of Samaria. A few plain lessons in decency and honesty would certainly seem to include the limit of her capacity; and to talk to such a listener about "the water of life" or the spirituality of God surely appears the height of absurdity.

Was it a blunder? Did Jesus waste His words upon the woman of Samaria? Did He send this poor sinner away mystified, unfed, or, worse still, puffed up with vain conceit of useless and uncomprehended knowledge?

Now, let us not forget that Jesus was the

wisest and the most wisely practical teacher who ever lived. Let us remember that He, more thoroughly than any other who ever taught on earth, knew what is in man; and if He spoke the deepest truth, — truth which commands the admiration of the ages to an ignorant and degraded peasant woman instead of to a college of sages, — then there is a meaning as strong as the word itself in the manner of its utterance. There are lessons for us in the fact that to the woman of Samaria Jesus said:

"God is Spirit: and they that worship Him must worship in spirit and in truth."

Perhaps the first lesson is the oneness of humanity in its nature and its need.

The meeting of Jesus with the woman of Samaria seems like the outcome of the merest chance.

Wearied with his journey, Jesus sits down by the well while His disciples go on to the village to buy food for evening repast.

The woman, during her noonday rest from her work, it may be as a common laborer in the field, comes to the well to draw water.

But glance beyond the conversation that followed, read what Jesus said after the disciples had returned and the woman had departed, and you will see that for Him this meeting was no chance. It was an appointment to do His Father's will; it was a work to be finished, not for the sake of the woman only, but for the sake of humanity.

This revelation of the mind of Jesus is needful for the interpretation of His talk with the woman.

He has never seen her before, He may never see her again, He has but a few moments in which to finish this work given for His doing. We must admire the patience of Jesus and the faultless tact with which He leads the woman on and draws her out. The narrative yields no sense of hurry or of slurring, but it does carry an impression of solemn urgency. No time is wasted upon little things or side issues. Carefully, calmly, step by step yet with swift decision Jesus reaches toward that which is deepest and most real in this woman's life and nature.

It is remarkable how in this short conversation the needs, the impulses, and the instincts of common human life make their appearance only to be passed by. The woman prays for deliverance from thirst and the drudgery of daily toil. But even while she prays the suggestion of Jesus is beginning to make her bodily and earthly needs merge and lose themselves in the sense of a higher need.

The question of social relations and of common morality comes up, and is used by Jesus only as a goad for conscience, and in a way which shows that He does not regard morality as the final thing. And the subject of religion — the subject which to a multitude of men has always been considered chief of all — is introduced and dealt with as a matter of minor importance and made a mere stepping-stone to something more real. Jesus cared for all these things. He cared for wholesome conditions for the laborer, and for morality, and for religion. But His work now at this moment is the saving of a human soul. He cannot stop at anything short of that which is final. His

appeal must be made to that which lies at the foundation of the nature of this human being, it must reach her actual inmost self. The moment which Jesus chooses, the word which He takes hold of, is significant.

The woman in her ignorant manner has been speaking of the difference between Jews and Samaritans in their fashions of worship. Jesus seizes the idea of relationship between God and man implied in worship. He says to the woman:

"God is Spirit: and they that worship Him must worship in spirit and in truth."

Remember, now, this is not abstract doctrine, it is part of the talk of Jesus with the woman of Samaria. It can mean but one thing; it says to her:

"God is Spirit. And you — since you can worship Him — *you also are spirit!*"

Coarse, common, sinful, far from spiritual though she may be in appearance or in disposition, yet it is true that even the woman of Samaria may come face to face with God who is Spirit, because her actual inmost self is spirit too.

The manner of this word of Jesus, the sort of person to whom it is spoken, gives to his saying a world-wide, all-embracing sweep.

If the other person in this conversation had been Nicodemus, or Mary of Bethany, or the Apostle John, then the quiet but decisive assumption of Jesus that there is in his listener a spirit able to come into the communion of worship with God who is Spirit might appear less astonishing. We might say, and we would say:

The spiritual nature in Nicodemus has been developed by his training; Mary and John belong to that choice company of exceptional natures who are born spirituals.

But the Woman of Samaria! how can such a thing be true of her?

Now blessed be His Holy Name! the Lord did speak His great word, with all its implications, to the Woman of Samaria! And thereby He says to us:

"Not selected specimens, not a few chosen ones out of the mass, but every human being, yea, even the lowliest, even such as this woman

possesses a spirit; and in every one alike the spirit is the real self."

Do you ask, then, What is spirit?

That is one of those questions to which no answer in words is possible. We are fearfully and wonderfully made even as to our mortal bodies. Still more marvellous, still more full of mystery is the life which animates our bodies. But the animal life is not spirit. If the anatomist cannot lay bare the secret of life, if the biologist cannot find or define or analyze life, much less can any human science grasp the mystery of spirit. The spirit is not simple brain-power; it is more than intellect. It is not thought, or feeling, or love, or liking; though it lives and moves through all these and uses body, life, mind, affections, and colors them all as the sunlight colors the stones and plants upon which it falls; but deeper, more real than all it uses or stamps with its mysterious imprint, when all else that goes to the making of a man has perished, spirit lives on deathless. Spirit is like the wind that bloweth where it listeth and thou hearest the sound

thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh or whither it goeth. And yet without argument, above all argument we know Jesus is right. We are conscious, we know that within us, deeper than our very life there is something — and that something our real self — which reaches toward and responds to the call of God who is Spirit.

But no sooner do we try to explain or define this something than we become confused. We fall back upon what has been taught us — perhaps when we were children.

We say, " Yes, I suppose I have a soul, — or spirit, if you choose to call it so, — and it is the most important part of me, because it must live after the death of the body."

It is remarkable how commonly the first, and often the last and only idea of spirit is the thought of its immortality. To describe spirit as " the immortal part of us " seems a sufficient definition.

And well for us it surely must be if this truth of the immortality of our spirit takes hold of us, for one of the most awful attributes of spirit is its power of deathless life.

Yet in this very truth, or rather in our treatment of this truth, there is a danger. Too easily we dismiss all thought of the spirit's activity from this present life and transfer it to a life beyond. We let the life of flesh and blood and the things that are seen fill all our horizon here, and try to satisfy our higher self with a hazy hope that hereafter, in some indefinite future, spirit may perhaps have its turn.

The ancients used to illustrate immortality by the cycle of the worm, the chrysalis, and the butterfly. Man in his present state, they said, is the worm. Death is only seeming. The worm spins a chrysalis out of its body when winter approaches ; it is not dead, but sleepeth. And when summer comes again, out of the chrysalis bursts a glorious butterfly. The butterfly was their emblem of the soul, the spirit.

The parable is beautiful, and there is noble truth in it; yet, after all, only a half-truth. It will not do to imagine in ourselves only bodies, only worms now. For *now*, as truly as here-

after; yea, now for the sake of the hereafter *Spirit is in us the real thing, the true self!*

In the saying of Jesus there is, in the original, no definite article. He did not say, "God is *a* Spirit." He said, "God *is* Spirit."

That is a wonderful definition of God! It lifts our thought of God far above and beyond all accidents of time and space, and all limitations of bodily form.

But let us not forget that there is more than a grand idea in this great word of Jesus; let us remember how it was spoken to the Woman of Samaria, and therefore to the spirit in each one of us, opening for us all the door of communion with our Father through worship, saying to us,

"God is Spirit; and they that worship Him must worship in spirit and in truth."

The record of the religions of the world is mostly a sad story of attempts to realize and worship God as something else than Spirit. There is a terrible twist in human nature warping men toward worship of the Creature rather than the Creator. But the Second

Commandment, which says, "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above or in the earth beneath," has not lost its meaning with the decay of the ancient heathenism.

To-day, when our new knowledge has brought such new and overpowering awe of Nature, and with bated breath we speak of the Unknown Force dwelling in the universe, are we not in danger of putting Nature in the place of Nature's spiritual God?

Now, the harm of it is not only the dishonoring of God: it is also the deep hurt to ourselves. It logically becomes denial that we are spirit, and separates us from our Father. Or if some shadowy communion with the mysterious Power in Nature may be had, this can appear possible only to the specially gifted or the supremely cultured. Every religion and every philosophy which regards God as an outside Being or Force dwelling in a distant heaven or identifies God with Nature tends toward spiritual aristocracy. Only when we know that God is Spirit, and that we

too are spirit, does His Fatherhood and our brotherhood with each other come into clear view.

We may differ in earthly circumstances and in mental endowments, but down deeper than all else is the real self, the essence of humanity, the spirit which is common to each of us. And *that* was made to, and can come into communion with the Spirit who is Father of our spirits.

Augustine says, "We had gone out of doors and we are sent inward. God is near. To whom? To the high? Nay, to them that are contrite of heart. Dost thou seek some mountain to lift thee up to Him? Come down that thou mayst come near Him. But wouldst thou ascend? Then ascend; but seek not a mountain, the ascents are in His heart. Make thyself a temple of God within thee."

"God is Spirit: and they that worship Him must worship in spirit and in truth."

Why was the last word added? Why does Jesus say we must worship *in truth* as well as

in spirit? A moment's reflection will show that it must mean more than just honest intention. We may understand if we catch the keynote of this word of Jesus. The keynote is *reality*. God is Spirit. That is His real essence. We are spirits: spirit is our essence, our real self. We worship in truth when we face the realities and accept the facts.

A communion between God and men is here declared which cannot be conjured up by outward forms or appealing ritual. Nor can this worship in spirit and in truth be realized through any mystical state of mind or wrought-up feeling. It is the simple acceptance of the actual relationship of your spirit to your Father who is Spirit.

This communion with God is not tied to time or place or circumstances, nor to moods or feelings. Such worship, such humble, loving, reverent fellowship of your spirit with your God may be calm as a summer evening, or it may fill your soul with strength amid life's stormiest days. It goes on always. It may be with us even in the midst of business

cares. There is no truer worship than that which ascends out of the turmoil of the most common and sordid distractions, claiming the fellowship of your Father's Spirit with your spirit and His mighty help when the world would claim you for all its own.

This divine, this spiritual communion in worship goes on, if we have accepted it in truth, even when we are scarcely conscious of it. Instinctively the spirit of one who has learned what it means to worship in spirit and in truth glances upward out of the mists of sorrows, or the distractions of joys, or the clamor of duties and feels that the Father of our spirit is near.

Perhaps the idea of such fellowship with the mighty and mysterious Spirit of God may seem extravagant. And not only would the idea be extravagant, but the actuality impossible but for one significant fact.

Jesus told the Woman of Samaria that ". . . true worshippers shall worship the Father in Spirit and in truth, for the Father *seeketh* such to worship Him."

God does not wait for us to find Him; God does the seeking. The mighty Spirit whom we approach is the Spirit of our Father, who meets us more than half way. We hear, in the words of Jesus, the call of His Spirit to our spirit. For us, the blessedness of worship in spirit only waits on willingness to worship in truth, to face the facts, to acknowledge the relationship between our spirit and God who is Spirit, to confess that between us is the bond of Father and child.

COMMUNION WITH CHRIST IN THE COMMONPLACE

Is not this the Carpenter, the Son of Mary, the brother of James and Joses and of Juda and Simon? and are not his sisters here with us? And they were offended at Him. — MARK vi. 3.

COMMUNION WITH CHRIST IN THE COMMONPLACE

What a touch of human nature! Here is something the like of which is happening every day and has always happened since the world began.

Envy, jealousy, mean and petty spite, blocking the way of goodness and truth and wounding noble souls to the quick!

And yet these things are so common, they are so unavoidable a part of every-day life always and everywhere, that to complain of them seems foolish and unmanly.

Nothing could be more realistic than the gospel treatment of the Nazareth incident.

Not only does the scene in the synagogue live before our eyes, but the very minds of the Nazarenes are laid bare; and we feel, as no homily could make us feel, the deadly, self-inflicted hurt of the unbelief born of their

blind jealousy, the paralysis of spiritual sense produced by their unrealized sin!

But we also see something else. We have in this Nazareth scene a singular picture of the daily cross which Jesus carried. The curtain which covers His private and personal life is lifted, and we behold Him tempted like as we are, not alone with great occasional temptation, but with the sting of those small yet exasperating and most wearing trials which meet us in the ordinary course of our lives.

The Nazareth narrative, moreover, helps to show us what sort of person this Christ of ours really is.

One of the familiar facts of the life of Jesus is that He was a man of the people,—the "Galilean peasant" He is sometimes called; and building upon that picturesque description it is possible to construct a sort of fairy story and call it "His Beautiful Life." Such a picturing of the life of Jesus fits well enough into the idea of a Christ who is only a Sentiment, a far-off example shorn of power to save. It may also be made to fit the idea of

a Christ who is nothing but a Religious Being shedding forth a misty halo of condescensions upon men.

The real Christ is different. His humanity is genuine. He takes His place without reserve as a man in the midst of His fellow-men. He is hedged about by no special privileges protecting him from the common lot; nor is He any mystic dreamer withdrawing Himself from rude contact with common people and their vulgar, sordid faults and sins. "Is not this the Carpenter, the Son of Mary, the brother of James and Joses, and of Juda and Simon? And are not his sisters here with us?"

From whence hath this man these things, — this wisdom, these mighty works? The Carpenter forsooth! The man whom we have seen every day in his shop making our ploughs and ox-yokes, — He to set himself up for an inspired teacher! And then the envy-poisoned tongues of spiteful gossip are let loose and vent themselves upon His brothers, His sisters, even upon His holy Mother!

Yes, Jesus the Christ, whose name has been reverenced by the ages, when He comes to Nazareth where He had been brought up finds Himself only the Carpenter, and the vulgar jealousies of rude and narrow-minded villagers buzz about Him! Verily He took not on Him the nature of angels, but He was made in the likeness of men!

None of us dare look down upon God's Christ. To pity Him would be impertinence for the highest of us; yet to the lowliest He is close at hand, a true yokefellow in the most threadbare and contemptible of our trials.

He met, it is true, with larger trials; He was set upon high mountains of temptation where dazzling ambitions glittered before His vision. No man ever reaches a place so high that he can have reason to feel that Jesus no longer is able to understand his temptations, and not one of us has the right to imagine that our Saviour cannot sympathize with our miserable worries; yes, even though these be the fret and irritation of the idle or envious talk which our neighbors chatter about us.

The Lord knows it all. He can feel with us down to the last, the most trivial, the most unspiritual of our trials.

Yes; Jesus can sympathize with us, but can we sympathize with Him?

And this does not mean, Are we sorry for Him? but it means, Can we feel *with* Him? Can we stand beside him in the fellowship which He held fast to, — fellowship with even the meanly disagreeable among His fellow-men and ours?

The atonement of Christ carries a significance which we often fail to realize; we forget that He bore the sins of our neighbors as truly as He bore our own, and that communion with Him involves the sharing of His cup, the bearing with Him of the burden of the sins of our brethren. The Nazareth incident reveals this burden as, in part, the dull load of the common, contemptible sins of envy, jealousy, evil speaking.

The lesson is not an easy one. Nothing cools love for our fellow-men more quickly or more surely than such sins. When people

say mean things about us, when they slander us or vent their spite against us, our hearts harden. Perhaps we return hatred for envy and let the floods of bitterness overflow in our souls. Or perhaps we simply shut the offender out of the reckoning of our fellowship and allow a cold disdain, a freezing indifference, to take possession of us. And this not only envelops those who have abused us, but it develops into a general distrust, and causes us to shut ourselves up within ourselves until the wells of sympathy with our fellowmen run dry. But how was it with Jesus? Did He feel the bitter words of His old neighbors? Yes, they cut him to the quick; and yet we can see that His desire went out to the Nazarenes. Not His unwillingness but their unbelief, alone prevented His doing many mighty works of blessing in Nazareth. And what He could, that He did: He laid His hands upon a few sick folk and healed them; He departed, not with bitterness but with profound sorrow in His soul, marvelling at their unbelief. And although on this, or perhaps

on a former occasion the madness of their envy went to the length of an attempt to kill Him, Jesus never repudiated Nazareth. Again and again He returned to His old home. Among those jealous of Him were apparently his own brethren. He never disowned them, and they finally became His devoted disciples.

We might be tempted to think Jesus too large-minded to care for what the Nazarenes could say or think. But He *did* care, and was too large-hearted to turn away from them, He loved them too truly to allow their sins against Him to harden His soul, and He loved all His fellow-men too deeply to make it possible for Him to try to escape the full burden of all their faults. It is the glory of Jesus that He was always willing to accept the full consequences of His fellowship with men.

If any one ever had reason to feel himself above men, this was Jesus; for He was the Christ of God and heir to a kingdom beside which the Roman Cæsar's was poor and temporary. If any one ever had the

right to hold himself apart from men He had; for He was the one spotlessly pure man who ever lived. But He never did hold Himself apart from men. As no one else ever did or could, He made Himself not only one *of* His fellow-men, but one *with* them. And because He was so high and so holy the consequences to Him of this human fellowship were peculiar. He could not share our sins and faults by partaking in them, and therefore — shall we say, He had to bear with them? Now that is what we sometimes try to do; but there is no real fellowship in it. Bearing with people's faults, putting up with them, commonly means that we try to make the best of what cannot be helped. There may be patience in it; there may also be, there is often in it separation instead of fellowship.

Jesus did something far greater. He carried the burden of our sins as His own, — a cumulative burden that culminated on the Cross!

The patience of Jesus was no softness, nor any weakness. It almost misrepresents the pa-

tience of Jesus to call it gentleness; for it was love, so broad, so deep, so high, that it made the sins and sorrows of the world His very own, so that He carries the scars of their wounds with Him up even into the heavenly glory.

Now I think we feel this in its largeness; but its grandeur affects us more than its details. Thank God our Christ carried the burden of the great sins of men; but thank God again, He carried the more wearing burden of the far more common sins, — the little contemptible faults which are always bubbling up from the seamy side of human nature everywhere.

Can we sympathize with Jesus in this? Can we drink of His cup? Have we caught His spirit, so that our love for our fellow-men rises not only above social fences, but higher still, above the meanness, the narrowness, the stupidity, the envies and jealousies and hatefulness, which make so large a part of the wearing fret and irritation of daily life in the midst of our fellow-men? Can you bear such things from a

person and say in your heart, "Yes, he is all this, but he is my brother, and his faults are part of my burden"?

Our constant tendency is to make our religion, not perhaps a thing of Sundays and of special occasions, but something which belongs to the great affairs of our souls, and therefore has little to do with the small, the mean, the disagreeable things of life. Partly this is a result of a natural bent toward unreality and formalism, or, as it might more honestly be called, a bent toward unbelief in the reality of our relation to God. A great deal of religion is either superstition or conventionality, — either a vague feeling that it may be well to keep on the right side of the Higher, Unseen Powers, or else a matter of habit or fashion, — and in neither case can it have much to do with what are, after all, the ever present realities of life.

But there is a more creditable reason why it is difficult for some persons to allow any contact between their religion and the prosaic things of daily experience.

It is doubtless true of certain refined, sensi-

tive, and deeply reverential natures that their thoughts of God make Him appear too high and too sacred to be touched or troubled with the pettiness, and especially the degrading pettiness, of human life. The things which such natures hate and shrink from, whose very touch is felt as contamination, they cannot bring into His presence. And so, when evil passions rise in their souls and perhaps break out, as such things will break out even from the souls of such persons; or when they suffer, as sometimes they must, from the coarseness or the spitefulness of meaner men, they feel themselves shut out from God, — either unfit for His presence or unable to ask His help; unworthy to approach the Holy One until there is a lull in the storm of disturbed emotion and it seems possible to come to Him in suitable mental and spiritual poise.

We can all pray when the great troubles come; but when the little vexations — above all, the belittling ones, those that make us ashamed of ourselves or disgusted with our fellow-men — buzz about us like swarms of ven-

omous insects, then there are few of us who feel in a mood for prayer, and fewer still who have the deep and real faith which keeps our communication with Our Father unbroken.

What a lesson for us rises out of this picture of Jesus at Nazareth! The bare fact that He was there, — He the Holy One, the Christ, taking His place in the synagogue of that dreary country town, in the midst of its quarrelsome, narrow, bigoted congregation, exposing Himself to their mean gossip, their despicable spite, their degrading envies and the angry impulses of their small-minded jealousies, — the very fact that He, our Saviour, endured this, not only proves that He knows all about the temptations that arise out of such things and can sympathize with all who suffer from them, but it ought to dispel at once and forever any idea that the humiliating vexations of our lives can be a bar to communion with His Father and ours.

The truth about Nazareth appears to be that it lacked the poetic charm of the veritably rural village. It was not so very small a place, it

numbered three or four thousand inhabitants, it was upon a frequented route of trade and travel, its people were hardly unsophisticated peasants. There was little of the picturesque about the town except its situation, and it bore an unpleasant reputation. "Can any good come out of Nazareth?" So Nathaniel said, doubtless because others said it and also because he knew the place.

Nazareth was not even picturesquely wicked, but just common, quarrelsome, low in social tone. Yet *there*, fellow-Christian, your Saviour passed by far the greater number of His earthly years. There he lived His boyhood, and grew up, and worked at His trade; there He was the Carpenter. Nazareth was His home, to which he often returned even after the eyes of all Israel began to be fixed on Him as the hoped-for or the feared Messiah. He was always known as Jesus of Nazareth; yea, the very inscription on His Cross named Him Jesus of Nazareth, and Jesus of Nazareth He will be until He comes the second time in power and glory to judge this world. All

through His life Jesus carried the monotonous, leaden burden of the vulgar sins of His earthly dwelling-place, and the depressing cloud of its colorless cares ever hung about Him.

Jesus never repudiated this fellowship with the commonplace, with the low average which is the dark average of humanity. In His spirit we know He lived above it all; He never allowed it to degrade or conquer or even depress Him. But He never refused or shrank from the burden of it; He was never ashamed to be called The Nazarene. And never for one moment did this fellowship with the commonplace make Him love men less; nay, He loved them the more for it, with deeper sympathy because by experience He knew their need.

If we would follow Jesus, we must follow Him through Nazareth. There is no place where communion with Him and through Him with Our Father may be more real than in the Nazareth of those little degradations which constantly fall upon every one of us as the bitter crosses of our day's work.

What a light Nazareth casts upon the prayer of Jesus for his disciples that they may be, like Himself, "in the world, but not of it"!

It is possible and blessed to live in such fellowship with Jesus that our fellowship with our most faulty brother-men and the bearing of our share of the burden of common, thread-bare sin and fault, instead of degrading us, may refine our souls, and show us a clear path up that shining way whither Jesus our Master has gone into His Father's Presence.

CONSIDER THE LILIES

Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: and yet I say unto you, that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. — MATTHEW vi. 28, 29.

CONSIDER THE LILIES

The sympathy of Jesus with men is felt in all His life and His words; but here we catch a glimpse of His sympathy with nature. Nothing He ever said is more beautiful; and yet, the doctrine of this text — for it is not only poetry but doctrine — is as hard a saying to worldly minds as anything Jesus ever spoke. The glad dependence on our Heavenly Father, the unlimited trust in His power and His love which Jesus commends in this portion of the Sermon on the Mount have always appeared, to worldly minds, visionary and unpractical. The feeling toward this text is well shown by its most common literary use. It furnishes a semi-humorous proverb satirizing the ways of the butterflies of fashion, or of the happy-go-lucky ne'er-do-wells who, like the lilies, toil not, neither do they spin.

But we can scarcely afford to dismiss this word of the Lord in any such flippant manner.

Embedded in Jesus' doctrine of Divine Providence is a precious vein of teaching about Beauty and its place in God's world. The teaching, though not always clearly understood, is felt by all who are in sympathy with Jesus; and to many of His truest lovers it comes with peculiar satisfaction. Nothing brings their worshipped comrades nearer than this revelation of the soul of Jesus.

But there are several sorts of people, Christians and others, to whom this warm confession of the love — nay, the reverence — of Jesus for the beautiful must be bewildering. Is it possible that He, Son of God, Saviour of the world, can seriously care for so trivial, so inconsequent, so useless a thing as mere beauty?

Can it be consistent with the dignity of His solemn mission to regard His admiration of the lilies as anything more than a passing emotion? Is it not sufficient to find in this word of the Great Teacher an illustration of Divine Providence, or an example of the wisdom and power of the Creator who condescends to add the

trifle of adornment to His work and in the very by-play of His skill so easily puts to shame man's most ambitious efforts?

Now, it is indeed true that God's care for the lilies does illustrate His greater care for human souls; and true that His inimitable skill is shown in garniture of the flowers.

And yet, when the merely illustrative teaching of these words of Jesus is exhausted we are left unsatisfied. A tone lingers in our ears which assures us that in the very words themselves there is a larger message. Let us read them over carefully.

"Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: and yet I say unto you, that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these."

Try to forget that this is the Christ, the Son of God, who speaks. Think what it would mean if some unknown man had said this; think of him, talking to a crowd gathered out of doors in the warm sunshine on an open hillside whose slopes are covered with tangled growth of grass and thorny shrubs, through

which, here and there, flowers of the wild lily rear their glorious heads.

Tell me now; what is in the mind of this man, speaking through his words!

You will surely say, he has a very tender feeling for nature; he more than admires, he almost worships pure and essential beauty; and he has a keen taste, he knows the difference between man's pretentious imitations and the perfect touch of God's hand. Solomon's oriental splendor does not appeal to him, but the shape and hue of a wild lily goes straight to his heart.

Is the case in any way different because, instead of some unknown man, this is Jesus, Son of God, who speaks? It is different only because it is far stronger; for in Jesus we have the emotions and the knowledge of the Perfect Man; we have here, in His word, a revelation of the mind of Him who is the Truth.

The revelation goes farther than we think. It is not enough to say that Jesus loved nature and appreciated beauty; we grievously misunderstand Him if we allow ourselves to imagine that His feeling for the beautiful was a passing

emotion, a grudgingly permitted relaxation in the midst of more serious affairs. As Jesus saw it, nothing could be more serious; for beauty, in the way He saw and felt it, is eternal truth. It is an element of the nature of God.

There is something vastly pathetic, and enlightening as well, in the after history of the lily, as it lay in the mind of Jesus and is disclosed in His words.

"If God so clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is and to-morrow is cast into the oven . . ."

I think we shall hardly mistake if we read into His words a gentle reproach, not precisely of man's ruthlessness, but of human indifference to God's finest and most loving skill.

Now, mark it well! Jesus does not complain because people too poor to buy better fuel cut down the lilies along with the bushes surrounding them to make the fire needful for cooking their humble food. He knows that God never grudges His best gifts for man's most common use. Man comes first; all things in this world are for the sake of God's children: "If God so

clothe the grass of the field (and the lilies), how much more shall He clothe you, O ye of little faith?"

And for that very reason we are guilty of a wretched blunder if we conclude that God's heaping of His finest handiwork upon us for the supply of our coarsest needs proves that He sets no value upon it; and if we therefore argue that He gives the lily its heavenly hue from mere caprice, or makes the sunlight unspeakably glorious as it strikes through morning mists, or colors the sunset clouds at evening, just for His own amusement.

The beauty of God's world has a meaning to Him; and to us because we are His children. It ought to have for us a meaning far beyond those baser uses which in His lavish love He allows for the sake of our earthly needs.

The whole argument of Jesus in this part of His immortal sermon is one of protest against that dull, narrow, selfish earthiness which sees no good in anything that is not what we stupidly call "useful," — that worldly disposition which measures everything by the rule of bodily

necessity or comfort, and asks, even when the question is one of truth or righteousness or our soul's salvation, "Will it pay?"

We have in these words of Jesus about the lilies, a profound lesson upon the general subject of worldliness.

There has been, there is still a tendency in certain minds to count everything in the world as worldly, to separate the spiritual from all that belongs to the natural order of things, and regard the spiritual life as something antagonistic to the world, — even the natural world.

The logical outcome of such ideas is that the natural enjoyments of our earthly life are accepted only with hesitation, and justified only by necessity, and the beauty which fills the world is looked upon with suspicion.

Nor should every one who feels in this way be harshly condemned. This feeling is often a disease of noble souls on whom the problems of life in a world cursed by sin, the awful facts of the present, and more awful possibilities of the future weigh with crushing cruelty.

The earnestness which fears everything pleasant as a probably dangerous allurement, and disowns everything which might distract from one high aim, merits only our deep respect. And the more so since, being out of fashion, it troubles us scarcely at all. There is little enough left of it, God knows, in the world of our day.

Our temptations lie in a different direction. Our danger lurks in a tendency to regard this world as the sum of our existence, and the life here as complete and an end unto itself. The beauty of the world seems made for nothing more than our personal, passing, and selfish pleasure; and therefore its sensuous, rather than its spiritual aspect appeals to us.

Again the logical outcome is that, the idea of beauty is degraded. Beauty becomes a mere adjunct, an ornament of life; the idea of beauty falls even lower and becomes not only sensuous but sensual, and thus our worldliness has its revenge and becomes its own punishment in our degradation. The light of God which shines upon the world is darkened,

and beauty appears, even to honest worldings at best a trifling thing, of doubtful usefulness, and therefore something whose enjoyment must be relegated to idle hours when money-making is out of the question.

The ways in which a stern, religious asceticism and a gross worldliness may approach each other are remarkable; and in nothing do they come more nearly together than in their treatment of the beautiful. Both regard beauty as something frivolous, of small importance; a possible and probable hindrance to the serious business of life. Both alike, though in different ways, suspect the beautiful as full of lurking dangers. Both fall into the folly which Christ condemns, and make life consist in personal anxieties, and look upon the real things of life as hard necessities to be mastered by force of personal will. Both practically refuse to see that God is our Heavenly Father and that this is His world, — a world full of His thoughts which are higher than our thoughts, and His ways, which are higher than our ways.

Let us turn to Jesus. It is clear that He knows that the world is full of unworldly facts. In the same breath in which He warns us not to lay up treasures upon earth and implores us to make our investments in heaven, He calls upon us to consider the lilies. And His words imply that, though the lilies grow out of the ground in the midst of the neglected spaces of the world's bosom, there is something heavenly about them, — a quality not to be compared to man's clumsy art. In effect, Jesus tells us that the beauty of the lilies is the reflection of our Father's perfection.

There may be a significance in the particular example chosen of Jesus. The lily, though often one of the most gorgeous of flowers, is one of the least sensuous in its suggestions. It bears in itself a hint of the spiritual. The white lily is not only the chosen, but the naturally chosen emblem of purity.

But whether the lilies of the field as Jesus saw them were white or flaming red ; whether they may even have been some other flower known to us by a different name makes no

difference. It is enough that Jesus teaches how the world, even in its obscurest and most neglected corners, is full of God's thoughts; and enough that the glory and beauty of His thought puts to shame our worldly wisdom concerning useful and necessary things. He teaches us that this world is full of heavenly reflections. And by means of these, in one heart-searching word He reverses the worldly order. He shows us that *Spirit is the real thing;* and the things of the body and of the earthly life are only adjuncts, necessary indeed, yet simply servants to the real and great thing.

Can anything be more intangible than beauty? You cannot analyze it. You can tell that a flower is red, or golden yellow, or sky blue, or pearly white; you may say that its form is graceful or glorious. You have not in the least explained the impression it makes.

You call the ocean grand, or the mountains majestic, or the sky heavenly. Your words have no meaning, except that they attempt in

some feeble way to express an impression made upon your inmost soul.

The idea of beauty may indeed, be mixed with fleshly thoughts; but then we know it is corrupted. Beauty, pure and simple, touches only your soul, your spirit.

It is mockingly said by anatomists that beauty is only skin deep. The saying is false, because beauty is not even skin deep. Personal beauty is in some mysterious way a reflection from the soul which lives in the body. A human face may be fair to look upon, yet only sensuous; or the features may be homely, yet full of an unexplainable light that makes the face most beautiful.

And that sort of beauty, whether in a flower or a human face, is something no human art can produce and all the money in the world could not buy. There is no use in it, measured by our coarse standard of the useful. You cannot live on beauty, or turn it into food or clothes, or build up towns, or create steamship lines or trolley roads with it. It is n't business, it does n't pay. But when all

the roar of the world's business is hushed, and all the greedy grasp after earthly goods has become nerveless and dead, and all the anxieties, great and small, of this life of busy trifling have sobbed themselves into eternal sleep, and all the world's hard-won wealth is melted in the fervent heat of the final conflagration, — then this reflection of the Eternal Mind of God will live on, along with other intangible yet undying things, like righteousness, truth, love.

The world is full of beauty, yet beauty does not find an altogether congenial home here. The lily fades quickly; to-day resplendent, to-morrow it may ignobly help to cook a poor man's dinner. Yet beauty is everlastingly reproduced. God keeps the world full of it for our teaching.

Beauty is in the world, but not of it. In heaven it is native, part of eternal life, because it is part of God's nature.

In this world the beauty of the Lord our God is upon us because it shines down from Him into His world — even into a sin-stained

world. In heaven the beauty of the Lord our God will be in us as well as round about us, an everlasting light and splendor.

I think in heaven they would laugh at the notion that beauty is not useful. Beauty and Truth would seem to stand there in a place something like that of food and clothing in this temporary life.

Christ's word about the lilies calls us back to its beginning in that other word :

" Lay not up treasures upon earth, where moth and rust corrupt, . . . but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, . . . for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."

THE MUTUALITY OF FORGIVENESS

Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little.

LUKE vii. 47.

THE MUTUALITY OF FORGIVENESS

The Gospels are full of suggested biographies, glimpses of lives with untold histories. The story of the woman who was a sinner, whom we see as a forgiven sinner is one of them. A protecting veil of brotherly love is thrown over her past.

Both tradition and criticism have tried, in their equally clumsy and impertinent ways, to tear away the veil. Criticism would make this story nothing more than Luke's version of the anointing of Jesus by Mary of Bethany. Tradition identifies the woman who was a sinner at once with Mary Magdalene and with Mary of Bethany.

A foul wrong is thus done against one of the most holy and beautiful characters in Gospel history; and Jesus is wronged by the implication that His forgiving love was sufficiently uncommon to make it necessary to give a name to each forgiven one.

We do not know who this woman was. We know neither her name nor her story. But the circumstances in the midst of which we see her make it well nigh certain that she had met Jesus before. Possibly she may have listened to Him as hundreds of others listened while He declared His gospel of Divine love and forgiveness. It is, however, scarcely satisfying to regard this woman simply as an impressed auditor of public preaching. The scene in Simon's house points backward to something more personal. We cannot escape the feeling, which amounts almost to conviction, that in some way she had met Jesus face to face.

The story which lies behind what we are allowed to see belongs indeed to those many other things which Jesus did which are not written; and yet some searching glance of the Christ into her very soul must have revealed her to herself. Some mighty word of His must have opened a door of hope in her apparently hopeless life and made her a new creature in possession of an incredible salvation; because this deed of hers, this so costly

anointing of her Saviour, was evidently not prayer, but praise.

The very tears with which she washed the feet of Jesus were tears of joy, even though the sorrow of past sins may have mingled in them. This uncalculating, this passionate adoration is not so much imploration as it is a most profound gratitude. Nay, it is more than gratitude: it is the devotion of her rescued soul shown in demonstration of a love whose depth can be measured only by the unbounded reverence through which it appears. The lack of sympathy with which her adoration was viewed by Simon and his guests, the loneliness of it in the midst of that coldly respectable company, does but accentuate its strength and beauty.

But Simon's unexpressed comment betrays him as surely as the woman's adoration reveals her.

It would probably be unjust to reckon Simon, even though a Pharisee, among the enemies of Jesus. "He desired Jesus that He would eat with him."

From religious as well as from personal reasons a Pharisee would be fastidious in the choice of guests at his table. We must give Simon the credit of believing that his desire was an honest desire. Possibly he thought he was helping Jesus: doing Him a favor, giving Him a social lift.

There would seem a touch of patronage in Simon's treatment of Jesus. It was enough to ask this Prophet of Nazareth, this young man from the back country of Galilee, to eat with him. It was uncalled-for to offer such attentions as would be suitable to a Rabbi from Jerusalem. The washing of the feet, the anointing appropriate to a really distinguished guest, might well be omitted. No insult was necessarily intended. Simon's neglect may easily have been nothing worse than the careless yet keen sense of social discrimination common with such men as he.

The conventionality of Simon's mind is vividly seen in his criticism of Jesus' reception of the worship of the sinful yet forgiven woman. A prophet — a real prophet — would

have known what sort of creature this is who is touching Him: He would have recoiled in holy horror.

Simon was a good man; but his sympathies, his knowledge of himself, his sense of humanity, his sense of sin, were all fettered, cramped, dwarfed by the social and religious proprieties which had grown with interlacing bands about his soul.

So much for the characters in this story. It is needful to have them in clear view if we would understand the teaching about forgiveness which the events of the story drew forth from Jesus.

The parable with which Jesus answered the unspoken thought in Simon's heart is exceedingly simple. It was meant to be; it was spoken to Simon and adapted to his understanding. We may for the present pass by both the simple little parable and its application, so dramatic, so crushing, and come at once to the doctrine announced in the text: "Wherefore I say unto thee, her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much:

but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little."

The phrasing of this word of Jesus is curious: "Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; *for* she loved much."

This might seem to hint at a price-list, and a strange one: so much forgiveness for so much love.

But the second clause is different. It drops the commonplace of the parable of creditor and debtor. "To whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little."

The price-list — if it be a price-list — is reversed. The Lord does not pay us in forgiveness according to the measure of our love. *We* pay Him. So much love for so much forgiveness.

Now, I believe there is a meaning in this apparently confused manner of statement: there is a higher logic here than any logic of mere legality. Jesus is not stating a formal law; He is not laying down a rule by which we may regulate feeling or action. Jesus gives us here a psychological reflection, a penetrating

meditation upon the way in which forgiveness and love act and react upon each other in the human soul.

We have in this word of Jesus something truly profound. He tells us that a certain condition of soul is needful before forgiveness can come in. Not only is it true that the loving soul is open to forgiveness, but only in a loving soul can forgiveness live and breathe and come to the ripeness of full blessedness.

It would be absurd to suppose that this woman who was a sinner was paid for anointing the feet of Jesus, for her tears, for her devotion with an extra portion of His forgiveness. And yet it is true that she was greatly forgiven, because she loved much.

The truth is that such a sense of forgiveness as was hers, such a blessed power of it in her life, such an overwhelming joy, could never have come to her without some deep, strong sympathy between her soul and the soul of her forgiver.

On the other hand, the soul of a Simonite, ready to give only legal interest of gratitude

for pardon received; unwilling to believe in the need of any great forgiveness, — the soul of the Simonite, legal, critical, self-satisfied, stifles even such forgiveness as it is compelled to receive and makes it "*little*."

Forgiveness, according to Jesus, has in it a mutual quality. Before forgiveness can be real, in order that forgiveness may become a living fact, there must be sympathy between the Forgiver and the Forgiven.

And is not this in accord with human nature? Do we not find precisely this in our human experience?

To forgive is not easy; but it is scarcely easier, in fact it may easily be harder, to be forgiven than to forgive.

It is a common saying, founded on bitterly common experience, that when a man wrongs you he begins from that moment to hate you. Certainly it is true that the effect of sin against a fellow-man is the hardening of the heart against him. This is but natural. The sinner must do it in order to justify himself.

If you are uncommonly large-hearted you may want to forgive the man who has wronged you. But how can you forgive while he remains hard and bitter in soul toward you? You may say to him, "I forgive you!" But until his feeling is changed your forgiveness falls upon flint, and flutters back to you a poor, broken-winged messenger. Forgiveness must be not only given, but *received*, before it becomes real and living forgiveness.

Very likely the man knows he has sinned against you. His conscience tells him he is in the wrong. And yet, do you think it is going to be easy for him to crush out that bitterness, to humble that pride of self-justification which stands between him and the acceptance of your forgiveness? It means much to be forgiven. There is necessarily a humiliation in it as hard to endure as the revengeful, unforgiving spirit is hard to conquer. By its very nature forgiveness is give and take. It must be *mutual* before it can be perfected.

No doubt it is true — and blessed be God it is true — that the patient long-suffering of a

true forgiver can sometimes conquer the bitterness and pride of the one who needs forgiveness and by its very magnanimity, or rather by its proof of love, bring him to repentance.

And yet even so, the forgiveness cannot complete itself until it is accepted. There must be some outgoing toward the forgiver; some confession, not only of sin but of sympathy; some recognition of a bond of love between forgiver and forgiven, — to consummate the forgiveness.

When love does conquer, when the sinner says to himself "I can stand this no longer," and comes confessing and craving the forgiveness waiting for him, then what bursting of barriers, what flood-gates are opened in his soul! Then it is feeble to call his emotion by the cold name of gratitude!

I believe, if we could know, we should discover that some of the deepest, strongest loves between men had their fountain-head in some great forgiveness. Could you call the love of the forgiven one a payment for forgiveness received? Or could you think of the

forgiveness of the forgiver as pay for the love?

No! Not for one moment! You feel instinctively, you know in your soul, that the love is something too big, too noble for any such debasing measure. In it you recognize at once the evidence and the result of forgiveness. Because the forgiven loves much, he is able to forget the humiliation of the forgiveness, and look above and beyond it. In a cleansed soul he is able to receive all the freedom, the joy, the blessing of the forgiveness.

To be much forgiven is something that depends upon, and lies within one's own soul. He is much forgiven who is willing to be forgiven because love has made him willing.

Is not something like this, however imperfectly it may have been sketched, at least an outline of the psychology of the forgiveness of man by man? And is the forgiveness of God, when He forgives men, and men receive His forgiveness — is it anything different?

The truth is, we shall never understand the forgiveness of God until we confess that be-

tween our souls and God there is a bond of nature.

Let us believe Jesus when He bids us call God "Our Father!" when by His uttered word, yea, even more by the Word made flesh, by the message of His very self and the true humanity of the very Son of God, He declares us His brethren and God's children. The laws of forgiveness are not the legal enactments of a strange king sitting on his throne in a distant heaven. They are the natural laws, the psychology, of the Father and His children. God's forgiveness is higher, infinitely more splendid and blessed than any forgiveness between man and man can be: it comes with a compelling graciousness hopelessly beyond our feeble powers.

And yet it is true of the forgiveness of God, as it is true of forgiveness between men, that there is in it an element of mutuality. Even God's forgiveness cannot be consummated until this mutuality is recognized. By no arbitrary rule, but by the nature of things, because of your nature and of God's, His for-

giveness cannot lay hold of you until you are willing to lay hold of it. Your soul must be open before even God's forgiveness can come in. Something like this would appear to be the teaching of the Lord's Prayer.

"Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors"; and of Jesus' comment upon that petition: "For if ye forgive men their trespasses your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses."

The forgiving heart is able to receive forgiveness from God. The unforgiving soul is closed even against the Divine forgiveness.

The woman who was a sinner was much forgiven because she loved much. Yes! Because, when by confession she had broken the barriers between her soul and her Saviour His mighty love melted them all away and set her soul on fire with a love which cleansed and cleared a great, wide road by which the splendor of the mercy of the Lord could come in.

Simon and his tribe of Simonites, with their self-satisfactions, their conventional moralities, their incapability of anything more than a little love, can receive only driblets of forgiveness. Their dull, decorous fences keep out all save the spray that will dash over from the towering waves of the Divine forgiveness. They love little, and are therefore little forgiven, not because God is not a great forgiver but because they are poor receivers, unresponsive to the Divine largeness.

Simon was a good man, with a highly respectable respect for God. He had acquired a mild admiration of Jesus. It would almost seem that he cherished a good-natured rather patronizing affection for this good young man from Galilee. He really wanted His company at dinner, and he was beginning to believe that Jesus might actually prove to be a prophet. We can imagine that Simon felt a shock of honest disappointment when he saw Jesus willingly receiving the adoration of the woman whom he knew for a sinner in that town. To himself he says, "It is a pity! After all, the

Galilean is no prophet or He would have known!"

In truth, neither God, nor God's Christ, nor his own brother men were crowning realities to Simon. Society and its rules were real; business was real; his religion was real; its church-going, its ceremonial, its doctrines, — all the outside things of religion, — were part of Simon's very existence. In this as in all else he lived upon the surface. Between him and actual life; between him and his heavenly Father and his sins against his Father; yes, between Simon and his own inmost soul with its crying needs and its towering possibilities, — a crust of commonplace, conventional earthliness had grown, and he lived on the pitiful and perilous surface of it.

I wonder, was the crust cracked by what happened on that memorable day when he asked Jesus to dine with him; when the Lord made such a searching object-lesson for Simon of that poor outcast woman whose sins which were many had been forgiven, whose passionate adoration of her Saviour witnessed the

depths underneath her broken and contrite, yet mightily rejoicing soul? Or did Simon, with the others who sat at meat with him begin scornfully to say, "Who is this that forgiveth sins also?"

We do not know. Simon and the forgiven sinner appear before us but for a moment, and then they fade from sight. For one enlightening moment they appear to tell us that God our Father, and Christ His Son, our Brother, do indeed bring near us the power and blessing of a great salvation. And they tell us that even God cannot give what we will not take! The power, the joy, the blessing of God's forgiveness and Christ's salvation waits our welcoming.

"Behold," says Jesus, "I stand at the door and knock. If any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him and sup with him and he with me."

THE DREADFUL PRAYER

And behold, the whole city came out to meet Jesus: and when they saw him, they besought Him that He would depart out of their coasts.

MATTHEW viii. 34.

THE DREADFUL PRAYER

Jesus had done one of His mightiest works. He had cast out a legion of devils from the demoniac of Gadara, who had his dwelling in the tombs.

Incidental to that great salvation a herd of two thousand swine had been destroyed.

There are modern communities which might sympathize with the Gadarenes when they besought Jesus that he would depart out of their coasts.

The "city" was little more than a good-sized village. Apparently the inhabitants held a sort of town meeting. We can see them discussing the situation with excited talk and many gestures. Doubtless there was at first some difference of opinion. It was impossible to behold that erstwhile dangerous demoniac now sitting quietly, clothed and in his right mind, without feeling that his Saviour had conferred a great benefit upon the com-

munity. But the swine! Two thousand of them! all that property sacrificed for the sake of one poor crazy man's soul!

The perished swine decided the question. Jesus was a dangerous character; he must go.

The narrative implies that they went to meet Jesus in formal deputation, as a sort of committee of the whole, and respectfully but decidedly besought Him that He would depart out of their coasts.

A moment's reflection will show that we have here an instance of prevailing prayer.

The beseeching of the Gadarenes was not only genuine, but it fulfilled a requirement of Jesus which often perplexes sincere Christians and sometimes excites the scorn of unbelievers. The Gadarenes prayed, expecting to receive what they asked. In no hesitating or doubting spirit did they come to Jesus, trying no experiment, but demanding that which they firmly believed He must grant.

Perhaps a little common sense might help us to understand Jesus. God is not the only person to whom we pray. We offer prayers

to each other, we ask people to do things for us. Do we ask what we do not expect will be granted? Never, if we can avoid it. A request — or a prayer — which seems to question the willingness or ability of the person prayed to, compromises itself in its very utterance. In prayer, expectation is the mark of respect; it is the test of sincerity; it is also the way to success. The attitude of the citizens of Gadara, their position of respectful but firmly expectant demand is the winning standpoint; not simply because of its forcefulness, but because it gives guarantee of honesty and of the reality of need.

And if this is true of our prayers to our fellow-men, is it less true of our prayers to our Heavenly Father?

The Gadarenes teach us a lesson. Their beseeching of Jesus carried with it that confident note which must always be heard in any true prayer. It is the more worth our while to mark this because the prayer of the Gadarenes was a dreadful prayer, and yet it was answered at once.

They besought Jesus that He would depart out of their coasts. Without delay, without remonstrance he granted their petition. He entered a ship and returned to His own city.

Do we ever pray the prayer of the Gadarenes? Do we ever ask Jesus to depart from us?

No. Not in the open manner in which the Gadarenes besought Him. We have information concerning Jesus which was hidden from those half-heathen men of the long ago; we know that which makes us unwilling to commit ourselves openly as they did.

And yet in the recesses of our souls do we not sometimes pray their prayer? And for reasons not very unlike those of the men of Gadara. They were afraid of Jesus, and his work of salvation interfered with their business.

In us too, the awe of Him persists in spite of the lapse of centuries, and in spite of — yes, increased by — our better knowledge.

We have learned that Jesus came to reveal God to us and show us the Father.

We may not be — probably we are not —

theologians; we concern ourselves very little with the philosophy of the astounding gospel of God's manifestation of Himself through His Christ.

And yet the facts of it search and find us in our inmost spirit; and when Jesus comes near we know that God is near; we feel ourselves in the Awful Presence of the Almighty!

Nor is the awe lessened because we know that Jesus is our human Friend and Brother. Nay, it is deepened; for a friend, a brother is a sharer of one's life.

The sympathy of Jesus brings Him into a solemn nearness; it leaves not a nook or corner of our souls or our daily doing from which we can safely shut Him out. We know that He will not, and cannot take the place of a mere acquaintance to whom we might say:

"To-morrow, when I have more time, I'll be glad to see you, but to-day I'm busy."

Oh, no! The very nature of the relation of Christ to us is that of a personal intimacy nearer than the nearest earthly friend; a nearness from which nothing can be hidden. The

manner of the salvation with which He saves us makes us no more our own, and gives Him the place of one who leads, whom we must follow.

The love of Jesus, like all great love, and most greatly of all love, has in it an element of awfulness which is sure to oppress the spirit of one who does not wholly yield to it. The very blessedness of the demand which it makes upon us may easily stir up revolt.

Perhaps in some enlightening moment the spirit of Jesus has come to you revealing His great salvation, making you feel the difference between life as you are living it and the life you might live if you would but let your Great Friend take His rightful place. You are mightily drawn toward Him. You long for the peace and the power which you know His indwelling can give; you know that you ought to open your heart and let Him take possession. And then the very splendor of His love frightens you; its high demand angers you. And you do just what the Gadarenes did; you cry out in your secret soul:

"Depart out of my coasts; leave me alone; let me be as I was before you visited me!"

And the Lord answers your prayer as promptly as he answered that which came from the shores of Galilee; and by Sunday afternoon or by Monday morning you are back in the old rut, — going your own way, looking after your herds of earthly swine; missing and perhaps grieving over those drowned in the sea; vexed because you have been troubled by the Divine Presence, yet relieved, since now you feel yourself free from the consciousness of that presence and the agitating desire for it.

There are varied ways of praying the fatal prayer.

Perhaps you are a member of Christ's church. There was a time when the Presence of Jesus was welcome; but now, things are different. The demands of the world have become heavy. There is little time for prayer, and little inclination for the detachment of spirit which prayer requires; you are preoccupied, you are very busy, your leisure

time, perhaps even your Sabbaths, must be reserved for rest and amusement.

There are moments when conscience troubles you. There is occasionally a bad half-hour with the spiritual situation. You admit that you have grown careless; yet the carelessness does not after all seem so very serious a matter. It appears simply as a laxness in not very essential religious observances. You excuse it to yourself and to others, you justify yourself and rather easily make out a very fair case in your own favor.

You can make out a fair case and find plausible excuse for your religious neglects because of a singular reason. And that is, you are not conscious of any personal consideration at all. Your laxness, or carelessness, or more broad and liberal practice — whatever you choose to call it — appears simply as a neglect of certain rites or observances, good certainly, perhaps necessary for some people, but not binding upon you in your circumstances. It does not appear to you as in any way a question between your soul and the spirit of *Some One Else!* In

truth, you have lost the Presence of Jesus; and you are scarcely conscious of your loss. In a formal way you still confess yourself one of His followers, you do many good and commendable things that are in accord with His teaching, you belong to His party, you are a member of His church.

But He Himself, His warm, living Presence, which once, even though perhaps only faintly, you surely felt — that has gone!

You no longer feel the need of prayer, you have grown into an apparently prayerless habit.

And yet the truth is, your whole life has gradually, unconsciously become a dreadful prayer. Silently, stealthily, without any aggressive intention but as it were by default, your life has become a prayer to Jesus that he would depart out of your coasts. And the prayer has been answered!

This sort of prayer is always answered, because, sadly enough, it is always real. It may not be, seldom or never is it expressed in words; yet it is a believing prayer, a demand

of the soul, and a demand that expects to be complied with.

The Lord once said that, "The children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light:" and the effectiveness of our dreadful prayers illustrates the truth of his words.

If we would but ask for Christ's presence as honestly as we ask that He shall depart out of our coasts, if we would ask by our actions and not with empty words only; when we really want Him; when our prayer for His Presence is truly part of our life so that it becomes like the other, the dreadful prayer, an unconscious wish, a demand that will not take denial and expects compliance, — then we shall know the strength of fellowship with Jesus and the blessedness of a real Christian life.

There are varied views of the nature of the Christian life. It is interpreted in terms of the observance of religious rules, or the experience of religious emotions. It is viewed as an attitude of the intellect toward doctrine, or of the ethical sense toward conduct.

There is truth in all these ideals. The discipline of religious rule, the power of religious emotion have both their place within the Christian life. The Life is based upon truth which must take human shape in doctrine, and the Christian Life is in itself the highest morality.

But the real thing goes far deeper than any of these partial manifestations. The real Christian life is the life of God our Father given us through Christ His Son; born in us by the mighty Spirit of Jesus; living by His Presence; growing through companionship with Him.

The real Christian life does not make a man less human; nay, it makes him more truly human and fit for human duties; stronger, more faithful, more courageous for all holy living and righteous doing. It does not require us to separate ourselves from our fellow-men. It brings us into nearest fellowship with all mankind. It is a life in this world — but not a life of this world.

The presence of Jesus is indeed awful when we come face to face with Him from the out-

side. We cannot forget that He is the same mighty One who could cast out devils or still the stormy winds and waves with a word. Our sinfulness shrinks from His holiness; His righteousness makes our worldliness fret and whimper; His love, with its intimate searching of our inmost thought and doing, is something before whose nearness and whose high demand our souls falter. And yet we need Jesus! Above all else we need Him! We cannot live the life we were made for, the life of God's true children, without the saving power and inspiring presence of Jesus.

And though that presence may seem awful when viewed from without, the awfulness melts into blessedness when we honestly receive Him and come into the holy of holies of His friendship. Then comes the peace that passeth understanding.

It is true; the wretched, the dreadful prayer, "Depart out of our coasts!" is heard and answered. Jesus never stays where He is not wanted. But blessed be His Holy Name! He is better to us than our deserts. He

goes; yet never so far away that we cannot call Him back, *if we call honestly!* — as honestly as when we asked Him to depart.

We do not hear that Jesus ever returned in person to the country of the Gadarenes: but he had pity on their ignorance and made the spiritual finding of Himself possible for them whenever they should repent.

Nothing in the Gospel is more touching than the prayer of the healed demoniac.

He had no eyes or heart for any but his Saviour; and when his fellow-countrymen cast Jesus out, he took it as though they had cast him out also. Home and friends were henceforth as nothing to him. He begged only that he might stay beside Jesus.

Surely this was an honest prayer. Was it answered?

Yes, but with a better blessing than that which the man craved. Jesus made him His ambassador; He told him,

"Go home to thy friends and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee."

The man obeyed. He went his way and

published through all the city how great things Jesus had done for him.

And we know that, in thus doing Christ's will he gained a closer intimacy, a nearer presence of his Lord and Master than even bodily companionship could have given. This man who longed only to be with Jesus, henceforth held the great fellowship of the love of Christ for men's souls. He reopened and held open for his Lord that door which the Gadarenes had tried to shut in the face of their Saviour.

And even though you may have prayed their dreadful prayer, though you may have besought Jesus that He would depart out of your coasts, His heart still yearns for you. That Cross on which He suffered and bore your sin — yea, even the sin of refusing Him — is the pledge of His immortally patient love and sleepless willingness to hear when you call.

But oh! be honest with Him!

WOE TO THAT MAN BY WHOM THE OFFENCE COMETH

Woe unto the world because of offences! for it must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh!

MATTHEW xviii. 7.

WOE TO THAT MAN BY WHOM THE OFFENCE COMETH

The Greek word translated "offence" is "skandalon." It has been transferred into English in our familiar word "scandal."

The text might be rendered "Woe unto the world because of scandals." But such a translation, literal and racy though it might be, would not express the thought of Jesus.

"Scandal," in our use of the word, means something disgraceful, something to be ashamed of; and often it means nothing more than a scandalous rumor.

The meaning of Jesus is deeper and stronger. The word He used is elsewhere translated "a stumbling-block." Its idea is that of something which trips one up in the dark and gives him a bad fall. There is no single English word which quite represents it. The Revised Version, which tries to be, and usually is, very exact, renders: "Woe unto the world

because of occasions of stumbling"; and this colorless circumlocution is really farther from the spirit of the original than our Old Version with its more vigorous simplicity.

Let the text stand, then, just as our Old Bible gives it; only let us remember that the "offences" are offences against righteousness, against truth, against honesty; offences which trip up the weak and make them sin; offences against brotherly love, against the spirit of Jesus; and then let us re-read our text: "Woe unto the world because of offences! for it must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh!"

Scattered through the great books of literature are sentences which give us pause when we come to them in our reading. Perhaps their beauty fills us with admiration; or they roll in upon our minds the impact of a mighty truth; or perhaps, as here in this word of Jesus, they make our hearts stand still in the clutch of some dreadful apprehension. But this text is literature only because it is something greater. It is the written record of a

living, spoken word; moreover, it is prophecy in the widest sense. There is teaching in this word of Jesus; there is a warning message. There is also prediction which has been so completely and so progressively fulfilled in the life of the world, that we cannot but shudder when we think of the cumulative woe toward which it points in the future.

A text like this is timely. It throws light upon the nature of Jesus; it turns toward us a side of His character which we men of to-day have not been entirely ready to face.

We are quite willing to look at the Gentle Jesus. The reality of His sweet humanity brings Him very near to us. And yet in this nearness, and in our free gaze upon the Man of Nazareth, there is a singular peril.

It is the peril which comes from comparisons. We compare His knowledge with the sunburst of our own time; we compare His world, so contracted, with the splendid world in which we live. We remember His humble birth, His poverty, His fishermen disciples.

Yes! we admire Jesus; we even imagine

that we worship His saving love and His beautiful self-sacrifice; while all the time, insensibly it may be, yet really, we patronize the Galilean peasant, the Gentle Jesus!

But the truth is, our mental picture of the Gentle Jesus is an illusion. None of the men of His own day cherished any such idea of Him. There was division of opinion concerning Jesus; but no one thought of Him as a weakling. There were those who despised or scorned or hated Him. But even these did Him the homage of regarding Him as a dangerous character.

The High Priests who prosecuted Him, and Pilate, the Roman governor who crucified Him, were afraid of Jesus. They crucified Him because they feared Him. The Cross was a tribute to the awe which He inspired.

Even the disciples with whom He was so free, to whom He was such a perfect comrade; even the men and women whom Jesus healed and helped felt in His very love and gentleness, the compelling might and majesty of an awful Presence.

The sense of the majesty of Jesus arose, not from His mighty works alone, it was even more deeply felt as an effect of His words.

After the Sermon on the Mount, when the congregation broke up the people did not begin to chatter about all sorts of indifferent things. They went away saying to one another in hushed and astonished tones, "He speaks as one having authority!"

One day in Jerusalem Jesus was talking to the throng assembled in the Temple. The officers of the Sanhedrin were sent to arrest Him. They returned empty-handed, with an excuse unprecedented in police circles. All they could say for themselves was, "Never man spake like this Man!"

Even to-day we feel the majesty of the words of Jesus. Our Sunday-school notions of His gentleness, our critical ideas of His limitations die away when we actually listen to Him.

The words of Jesus are becoming portentous in face of the problems of our modern life.

Men are beginning to understand that His love has an edge sharp against violators of His law of Brotherhood; we are beginning to see that His gentleness is the forbearance and the patience of conscious power; and that the humility of Jesus, the fact that He was the Friend of the poor and the Prophet of the People, is a fact big with serious meaning.

Our text would have its own solemnity, no matter who might have spoken it. The woes which come upon the world because of offences, and the woe which visits the man who makes his fellow-men stumble into sin is witnessed by every page of history and by every daily newspaper. But this saying takes a new solemnity and a deeper awfulness when we remember that it was spoken by Christ, the Judge of Mankind.

But notice now how different from the fashion of human reformers and popular prophets is this word of Jesus! The popular prophets are always foretelling a ready-made heaven on earth as soon as their reforms are accepted. They promise a magical cure of all

evils if only we elect them to office. Jesus has no quack medicines to offer.

His prophecy is not only penetrating in its exposure of evil, it is divinely large in its sweep and in its outlook. He blinks no facts. He faces human nature with its dreadful twists and its wretched selfishness, not only as it appeared in the men about Him, but as His clear vision beheld that same human nature through the weary vista of coming centuries.

"Woe unto the world because of offences! for *it must needs be that offences come. . . .*"

It is significant that this saying was not wrung from Jesus by the sight of what was going on in the great world about Him. The offences were not the things that the Herods, or Pilate, or Annas, or Caiaphas were doing; though God knows they might easily have furnished examples with their vile intrigues, and their reckless self-seekings, and their cynical disregard of each other's rights, and their cruel tramplings on the rights and welfare of the people. No! The offences were nearer home, within the family circle of His own

disciples. The large wisdom of Jesus saw how temporary was the power of the at present great ones, and how surely that power contained within itself the seed of its own speedy destruction. He saw also how big with consequences to the world was the living force held in the now obscure band of progenitors of the new and coming order. The offences which would hurt, must come from their successors, and therefore the first signs of these things in the disciples themselves awakened the anguish of Jesus.

The disciples had gotten it into their heads that their Master was none other than the Messiah of Israel, as He was indeed; but they were drawing their own conclusions. They obstinately spelled Messiahship in terms of earthly kingship.

Incidentally this shows how Jesus impressed those nearest Him. He was more than the gentle Teacher or the loving Healer; He was not Elias, or Jeremias or one of the prophets, to those who knew Him best; but He was Christ the King. They felt the commanding

quality, the imperial force, that was in the nature of Jesus. Their Master, so they believed, was soon about to set up His kingdom and reign like an emperor in Jerusalem.

"And what is going to be in it for us?" thought these disciples. Not only did they let ambitious dreams of earthly glories possess them, but they actually began to dispute among themselves; they even came to Jesus demanding, "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" — the heaven-sent kingdom on earth. Which is going to have the best place? How are the offices to be distributed?

All the greed of churchmen and of politicians and of business competitors; all the clutching after personal advancement and advantage careless of consequences to others, which has cursed the world from that day to this; all the evil brood of offences were there in the germ, in the breasts of those good men, those disciples of Jesus!

How penetrating the vision of Jesus! At a glance He sees not only the present fault so natural to these enthusiastic young men, but

He sees the woe that in after time shall come upon the world from the same sort of selfishness let loose.

He must correct the fault, now in the bud, in these His own comrades. And the gentleness of quiet, self-contained force is seen in His correction.

Jesus called a little child unto Him and set him in the midst of them and said, "Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven."

Then the great love of the Christ for the little ones began to swell in His bosom, and I think Jesus put His arm about the little boy and drew him closer to Himself, while He said, "And whoso shall receive one such little child in my name, receiveth me!"

And then, as He thinks of those who are not simply children in years but in character and position; of the little ones, unimportant, inconspicuous in the sight of the big world;

when He thinks of the multitude of plain common people who shall call Him their Christ, and yet shall be made to fall into sin by the stumbling-blocks of the selfish graspings of men prominent in church or state, — then the wrath of love arises in the soul of Jesus and He exclaims, "But whoso shall put a stumbling-block in the way of one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a great millstone were hanged about his neck and that he were drowned in the depths of the sea!"

And now, with that far look, that vision piercing the future so characteristic of Jesus, He beholds how through ages to come His righteousness shall be corrupted by those who stand in high places in His church so that they may grasp higher places; and how His truth shall be denied by men who profess faith in Him, because Christ's truth crosses their selfish desires or their vain conceits; and how men who call themselves Christians shall bring contempt upon the name they bear because, reckless of justice or righteousness, they

ride rough-shod toward what they call "success"; and there is wrung from the soul of Jesus the dreadful sentence, "Woe unto the world because of offences: for it must needs be that offences come."

Do we catch the true tone of this awful word of Jesus?

If you will think of it and remember how it came to be spoken, I believe you will see that it does not denounce woe against the world for the world's sins; but it prophesies woe to the world, and laments the sorrows which must come upon the world because of the sins of Christians.

The imperial nature of the Christhood of Jesus appears in this saying. He claims the world for His own, He claims the world in the mighty empire of His kingly love, and His great heart bleeds when He thinks of this collective humanity, His own world, His dear men and women and children, His little ones who must suffer by the selfish sins of those who profess His name!

The most dreadful things ever said were

spoken by Jesus; and I think He never said anything more fearful than this.

We think of the far-sightedness of Jesus, of the prophecy of His saying as proved by centuries of history.

But reflect now, think also of the magnificent faith of Jesus in His own Christhood! Think of the divine patience of Jesus and of His sublime confidence of final triumph, yea, even in spite of the corruptions His Gospel must suffer by the sins of its professed friends!

The world must suffer, but the world shall be saved; for the woe falls finally in its fatal consequences, not upon the world, but upon *that man* by whom the offence cometh.

And this condenses the awfulness of the word of Jesus. It makes the weight of it personal. "Woe to that man by whom the offence cometh!"

Woe to the minister of Christ who preaches to please men and make himself popular! Woe to him if he uses his office for his own comfort, and lives so that men have an amused

contempt for him, and because of him despise Christ's church!

Woe to the rich Christian who sets his business interests above the law of the land, and above that law of plain righteousness taught by the Master whose name he bears!

Woe to the Christian, rich or poor, who uses his church membership as an asset in his selfish affairs!

Woe to the church member whose disloyalty to his sacred obligations makes plain people imagine that Christ's yoke means nothing!

Woe to us all, if we dim the light of Christ-likeness which the Lord our Master, who is to be our Judge, has given us in sacred trust for the salvation and the blessing of our fellow-men!

Let us remember that this final, this personal woe, like the woe to the world, is not vindictive; it is not sentence of punishment: it is prophecy of consequences.

If offences have come through us, then as surely as night and darkness follow the withdrawal of the daylight sun, so certainly we

shall suffer. Perhaps we shall suffer here, in this life; perhaps in the life to come. But whenever, however our eyes shall be opened and we see the harm done by our selfish and dishonest use of God's grace and Christ's name, when we see how we have caused the little ones to stumble, then we shall wish we had rather cut off the hand or foot that walked in wilful self-seeking, we shall wish we had plucked out the eye that looked only to our own interest while our recklessness brought sin upon our brother.

The day will come when we shall see what the littleness and narrowness of selfhood makes it hard to see now; and we shall see that there are seeming gains which are real losses, and a saving of life that is the losing of life, and a losing of self which is the gain of all things.

The Gospel of Jesus is a gospel of Divine love; and therefore it is a gospel of judgment. Out of the doctrine of Christ's Brotherhood with us comes the doctrine of our brotherhood with each other. We cannot live apart from our fellow-men, regardless of the effect of our

lives upon their lives. Out of our brotherhood with Christ and with His world comes a possibility of consequences which ought to make us humble ourselves in the dust, while we implore our Father for help to see clearly and act truly.

THE MAN WHO KEPT HIS LIFE

And the lord commended the unjust steward, because he had done wisely : for the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light. — Luke xvi. 8.

THE MAN WHO KEPT HIS LIFE

WHAT is our idea of Jesus? It is possible to think of Him with a reverence which shuts the eyes to all beside the sacredness of His Divinity so that we forget that He was really human.

It is also possible to forget His Divinity and to view Him in a belittling way as the Galilean peasant, beautiful in His simplicity and ignorance of the ways of the world.

But we shall never understand Jesus until, distinct from the vision of His Divinity we realize the largeness of His Humanity.

Simply as a man, Jesus was a great man. He possessed the keen and accurate perception of human nature both in its lower and its upper strata, and the swift, the easy grasp of the true inwardness of affairs, social, political, commercial, and religious which belongs only to the few who are rightly called great.

It is true, Jesus drew the lowly, the distressed, the nameless masses to Himself in touching confidence and affection. If you will but think of it, that is something the greatest men have generally done. But, as we can see from the brief and fragmentary records of His life, He also compelled the respect, yea, even the awe, of men of high degree. Some of these men, leaders in church and state, began by despising Him. Before the end came they had learned to fear Him. They feared Him even after they had crucified Him.

In a high and true sense we have the right to say that Jesus was a Man of the World.

The human world, with its strength and its weakness, its virtues and its vices, its craft and its littleness was an open book to Him; and He translated the vernacular of this most puzzling and difficult volume with a skill so facile, and in a way so broad and vivid that He often surprises and sometimes perplexes us.

The Parable of the Unjust Steward, for example, is not of the sort that a simple-minded peasant could conceive nor a dainty religionist

dare to use. It is in itself a difficult parable; but specially difficult because Jesus is the author of it.

We are startled when we find *Him* using an incident of most consummate worldliness, a tale of what, in the slang of our day, we should call "graft," — and most complicated graft at that, — to enforce high and spiritual truth. The parable begins to become intelligible only when we consent to think of it as the utterance of a man familiar with the ways of the world, — a man of such assured position and admitted knowledge that men must listen to him with respect, and of such acknowledged loftiness of character that none shall dare misconstrue his handling of his illustration.

As to the principal character in the story, we must not imagine that the Unjust Steward was any mere underling. The measures of oil and of wheat in which he dealt when translated into terms of gallons and bushels, are at once seen to be too large for anything less than big, wholesale transactions.

Moreover, we know what manner of officials

were the stewards of the princes of that day. They were the trusted and powerful managers of great estates, and men of high importance in the financial world.

The accusation against this Steward was not actual dishonesty. It was "*wastefulness.*" The word is carefully chosen, and it is a note of character.

A man who is wasteful and extravagant in the management of his business affairs is almost sure to be extravagant and luxurious in his personal habits. And precisely this is the character we see mirrored in the Steward's own words.

When his resignation is demanded, as he faces the awkward situation he says, "What shall I do? for my lord taketh away from me the stewardship. I cannot dig: to beg I am ashamed!"

He has lost the manly hardiness needful for honest toil. He might beg loans from his lord's rich customers who have profited by his extravagance; but this would be too precarious — and too humiliating.

He has grown into the habits of a soft and pleasant life; and, true Child of this World that he is, this easy, luxurious worldliness is his all in all, and too precious by far to lose.

The Child of the World must keep his life; and no nice scruples can for one moment be permitted to stand in the way.

And he is shrewd, he is resourceful, this Child of the World!

With our imperfect knowledge of the business methods of that ancient time, it is not easy to understand the details of the transaction by which the Unjust Steward put his lord's debtors under personal obligation to himself. The deal was evidently fraudulent, and apparently one of those cunning frauds which the law cannot easily reach. It has been conjectured that the oil and wheat owed to the lord of the manor were not paid in kind, but that they represented amounts of produce purchased from the estate by merchants who gave their notes in payment; and that these notes were the "bills" which the crafty Steward invited them to scale down.

But the main point of the story is clear. The Unjust Steward made these wealthy debtors parties to a fraud in such a way that thereafter he could compel them to receive him into their houses and provide for him in the style to which he was accustomed.

He kept his life, that worldly life of sensual ease which to him was alone real living.

"And his lord commended the Unjust Steward because he had done wisely."

There are various interpretations of this difficult parable, but we may let them rest while we try to grasp one single lesson which surely is taught in this peculiar utterance of Jesus.

When trouble came and disaster threatened, the Child of this World did not give up. Not for a moment did he allow doubt to weaken, or misfortune to unman him. He set his wits at work. He resolved what to do. And the thing he did was effective; also, it was consistent, — it was the sort of thing natural to the sort of life which was all in all to him.

This Child of the World used his worldly knowledge promptly, thoroughly, unsparingly,

skilfully to save and keep the worldly life so dear to him.

"The Children of this World," says Jesus, "are in their generation wiser than the Children of Light."

What a contrast of names! "Children of this World." "Children of Light."

While reading the story of His Life, you have surely felt — for it is often something more readily *felt* than actually perceived — you have felt what might be called the far look, the wide vision of Jesus. The influence of it envelops Him like an atmosphere. And yet it is no hazy atmosphere of mysticism beclouding every-day actualities. On the contrary, He ever speaks like One who sees things — even the most common and most sordidly earthly things — with more than common clearness, through a light more sharply defining and more largely revealing than any light we know.

The unquestioned yet mysterious fascination in which Jesus and His teaching holds us lies not a little in this always felt though not al-

ways understood fact of His wide, His large vision, and perhaps even more in His peculiar use of it.

The very soul of His Gospel is, "I am the First Born Son of Light; and you, my brothers, Children of My Father, you also are Children of Light, if you will but accept your birthright!"

And the minor tone of sadness which runs through the message of Jesus, which we also feel, which makes Him the Man of Sorrows, comes from grief because He sees that so many of us love darkness rather than light and scorn our magnificent birthright, and remain content to be children of this poor, little, perishing world.

And the sadness of Jesus is deepened when He sees that even the Children of Light hold their inheritance with feeble grasp, and are less true to their real, their infinitely large and eternal life, than the Children of this World are to their poor and petty life.

If you study the parables of Jesus you will discover that almost every one of them looks out from some little window of familiar earthly

fact or incident into the greater life which lies above, yet round about this world. The parables of Jesus are like powerful field-glasses, bringing into near and convincing reality those solemn mountains which we carelessly imagined were only cloud-land.

And the Parable of the Unjust Steward, this strange story reeking with earthliness, showing how truly Jesus was a man of the world familiar with the seamy side of high life in His day, — this parable, so amazing as an utterance of the Holy Christ, is no exception. If it descends into the depths of sordidness, it rises thence into heights of severe and heavenly demand. The air which Jesus breathes while He tells this story of worldly crookedness is evidently an atmosphere more rarefied than that of this world.

If the crystalline clearness of that upper air exposes the repulsiveness of the shrivelled soul scantily hidden under the gay robes of the Child of this World, then this is because Jesus would have His little brothers, the Children of Light, learn the truth. He would have the

Children of Light, who yet must live in this world, exposed to its influences while they are passing through it, — He would compel them, to see the folly of a divided life.

The Unjust Steward, the poor, smart, frivolous Child of this World, was guilty of no such crime. His life — that which to him was life — was only a starved phantom of luxurious flabbiness; but he was true to it, even when it called for the sacrifice of his reputation and his self-respect.

We see the self-same thing all about us in this latter day of excessive worldly prosperity with its consequent luxuriousness.

There is a certain sort of thing called "life." It may be in reality a wretched, tiresome, empty thing; but the livers of it — how loyal they are!

And the gaudy standard they set up is held so high, it is flaunted so boldly, it glitters so brilliantly, that even the Children of Light are drawn toward it.

"The Children of this World are wiser in their generation than the Children of Light!"

The sadness of the Man of Sorrows speaks in these words; the grief of One who, standing in clear light, sees plainly how those He dearly loves are degrading themselves.

This parable is not for the outside world, nor for Pharisees, but for the Brotherhood of Christians.

Its place is significant. It follows the parables of the Lost Sheep, the Lost Coin, and the Two Sons, in which Jesus lifts the veil and lets us see how this world appears to the larger life beyond its little, provincial bounds, and lets us listen to the public opinion of heaven and hear the echo of the joy of the bright spirits of the universe over one sinner that repenteth — yea, the voice of the deep joy of the Almighty Father's heart over the return of a lost son.

If anything could make us understand the meaning and the value of Eternal Life and the high privilege and dignity of a place amid the Children of Light; if anything could teach us what the life of a Christian means and what it is worth, then these parables in the fifteenth

chapter of Luke's Gospel, read from Jesus' standpoint, ought to do it. The Man who Knows, the Great Expert who has been there, who sees by Heaven's light, tells us what Heaven thinks about these things.

And then He turns to His disciples and speaks to them in this Parable of the Unjust Steward, and shows them — and us — by an earthly satire what fools we are if we live the life of Children of the Light and Citizens of the grander worlds outside this little back country of earth, — if we live this new and real life hesitatingly, doubtfully, feebly, disloyally.

The Unjust Steward, the Child of this World, was wise because he was true to the only thing he knew as life. He was wiser than we, even though Children of the Light, if we fail to keep faith with our infinitely glorious life.

Oh, it is not easy ! We are still in the world. Its littleness, its narrowness, its provincialism, its vulgarities, its fleshliness surrounds us. In this murky atmosphere the world seems real, and the real, the eternal life seems like some misty shadow. In our inmost souls we know

it is not so; we know that the things that are seen are temporary, and that the things unseen are eternal.

But the thing which the world calls "life," even though our spirit knows it is nothing but emptiness and folly, is strong, here on its own ground.

It is not easy to live above it. But we must live above it. And here, on its own ground we must meet and overcome the world.

Something like this must be what Jesus means by His strange conclusion from this strange parable.

"And I say unto you, make to yourselves friends of the Mammon of Unrighteousness, that when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations. He that is faithful in that which is least, is faithful also in much; and he that is unjust in the least, is unjust also in much."

And if we would know what Jesus, The Light, sees as "least" and "much," He gives us a hint when He adds:

"If, therefore, ye have not been faithful in

the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches; and if ye have not been faithful in that which is another man's, who shall give you *your own?*" which seems to say: the things men call big, the business, the politics, the society of this world, are really little things. And these little things are not your own. "Your own" is something unspeakably larger and richer. But here in this world you must mix and mingle with the little things. You must have business transactions with the "other man." In the course of your pilgrimage his little things get themselves committed to you in trust. And the skill and faithfulness you show in dealing with the little things of the other man must prove your fitness or unfitness for a higher trust: for the "Much," for "Your Own," for the inheritance of Reality which *very soon is coming to every one of you.*

But through it all we must hold our banner high. We must remember that no servant can serve two masters, and that we cannot serve God and Mammon. We must live in this

world and deal with this world, but we must not stoop to its yoke nor let the world call itself our Master. We dare not live a divided life, we dare not let the Unjust Stewards all about us put us to shame and show themselves wiser than the Children of the Light, because they are true to the thing they call "life," while we show a weak and wavering loyalty to *Our Own*, to Reality, to Eternal Life.

May God give us light — His light — so that we may see things, not as they appear through the mad whirl and blinding dust of earthliness, but as they are in truth, as the perfect vision of Jesus declares them!

THE MAN WHO LOOKED ON THE DARK SIDE

Then said Thomas, which is called Didymus, unto his fellow-disciples, Let us also go, that we may die with Him. — John xi. 16.

THE MAN WHO LOOKED ON THE DARK SIDE

The man who expects the worst, and habitually looks upon the dark side of things cannot hope to be a popular person. Pessimism is gloomy and forbidding. Moreover, it checks "snap" and "go." It is a sort of treason against the spirit of our age. One of the articles of present-day faith is that we must look on the bright side.

But our anxiously cheerful optimism cannot hide the fact that there is a dark as well as a bright side of things; and there are people who are neither bad nor weak, people of high and noble character who are by nature so made that it is difficult for them to see any other than the dark side.

I believe we have an example in the Apostle Thomas.

"Doubting Thomas," he is called; but we shall better understand the nature of his doubts

and the nature of the man himself if we call him Desponding Thomas.

One must be dull indeed who fails to see that his doubt of the Lord's resurrection, his refusal to believe unless he should see the print of the nails and thrust his hand into the wounded side of Jesus was no speculative scepticism. His doubt is explicable only when we see in it the expression of deep dejection and hopeless sorrow.

The darkness of the Cross, the pang of the remembrance of the nails driven through the hands that had clasped his own in love, the spear rudely thrust through the sacred heart of his dear Master, the gloomy certainties of death were the things which the disposition of Thomas made most real. His sensitive soul had brooded over these horrors until he was incapable of accepting the testimony of his more cheerful and hopeful brethren.

The doubt of Thomas was but the expression of a hopeless love. The text gives a glimpse of the man as he really was.

"Let us also go, that we may die with Him!"

The circumstances are familiar to us all. Jesus had sought refuge from the rage of the Jews in the region beyond Jordan. His life was not safe in Judea. Then news came that Lazarus, the head of the house so dear to Him at Bethany, was sick. Jesus, knowing that by the time the messengers reached Him Lazarus had died, waited two days and then said, "Let us go into Judea again."

The disciples, very naturally, remonstrated: "Master, the Jews of late sought to stone Thee: and goest Thou thither again?"

Then Jesus spoke those memorable words about walking in the daylight of duty, where alone is true safety. He told them plainly that Lazarus was dead: and gave them to understand that the obligations of friendship, the glory of God required His presence at Bethany. He said, "Let us go!"

The other disciples appear to have been content, but Thomas shows out his character. There was a bright side. More than once before Jesus had faced danger and come through it unharmed. The Master was mighty; the

known power of His presence gave promise of safety and success. But there was also a dark side; even the courageous assurance of Jesus did not deny the danger. The natural disposition of Thomas compelled him to see only the worst possibilities. The death of Jesus at the hands of His enemies was possible; to the imagination of Thomas it appeared as a foredoomed certainty; he believed that going again into Judea could have but one result. His was an anxious love; a love which, just because it was so deep, so all absorbing was ever jealous, ever fearful of disaster, always expectant of the worst in the face of danger.

How many fathers, how many mothers know just what that means!

But Thomas was no coward. Who had most courage — those other disciples who went, as we may suppose, with a light heart looking on the bright side, or this gloomy man full of foreboding, looking death in the face and saying, "Let us also go that we may die with Him"?

Thomas appears but seldom in the gospel

story; yet on each occasion, with surprising consistency this ruling trait of his character is seen.

We meet him again at the Last Supper.

Jesus has been saying, "Let not your heart be troubled. . . . in My Father's house are many mansions. . . . I go to prepare a place for you. . . . And if I go . . . I will come again and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there ye may be also. And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know."

But the heart of Thomas *was* troubled. One sad fact hid all else. The bright side was indeed exceeding bright with its picture of the mansions in the Father's house, and the special room for each disciple prepared by the personal care and endeared by the personal touch of the Lord; and there was the promise of the Lord's return to take them into His eternal fellowship.

But for Thomas, all the fair prospect was clouded by one dark fact that rose immediately in front. His Master was going away, going *now*. The sinking sense of loneliness,

the painful wrench, the actual sorrow cancelled all comfort of what might lie beyond in the future. And when Jesus said, "Whither I go ye know, and the way ye know," the impatience of blinding grief could no longer restrain itself. Thomas exclaimed, "Lord, we know not whither Thou goest, and how can we know the way?"

Did he not blurt out the very thought that comes — it may be unbidden — into our own souls in our moments of bereavement?

Lord, you may know the way to heaven; you think I ought to know too; but I don't. Heaven seems far off and unreal. But my loss! — that is real; that is *here, now.* And my soul is all dark with it!

I have already mentioned the incident which has made Thomas best known, and has earned for him the name of The Doubter.

But his attitude when he refused to believe that the other disciples had seen the Risen Lord is in strict consistency with his character as elsewhere seen. It is simply the attitude of a sensitive, anxiously loving man who

habitually looks upon the dark side. Such a disposition does indeed often make faith difficult; and yet, to confound the doubt of Thomas with any coldly reasoned scepticism is to betray ignorance of human nature. It is also a sore injustice to a true disciple who loved his Lord devotedly and whom his Lord loved very tenderly. Jesus understood Thomas.

There is nothing in the gospel story more beautiful than the way in which the Lord drew out and brought to light those fine pearls of noble thoughtfulness and discerning faith which lay hidden under the blackness of the despondency of His friend; and by His challenge of the wounded hands and side made Thomas dare the boldest, the most advanced, the truest confession of faith in the Christ which had been made by any disciple.

"My Lord and my God!" This confession, more truly than any surface trait, reveals the character of Thomas. It lights up the inner shrine of his soul. We see the nature of that love which underlay all his

despondency and his hesitations. It was a love whose repressed but intense flame only waited opportunity to yield vision of mighty truth.

There is nothing speculative in the confession of Thomas; it is far from the dryness of a theologic formula; it is the living word of an enlightened man. It is a wonderful confession. Not even its declaration of the Divinity of Christ strikes its highest note. Its highest note vibrates with the thrilling tone of life. It is the confident claim of human fellowship with God.

Thomas did not say, "The Lord and the God!"

He said, "*My* Lord and *my* God!"

The Master whom he had so anxiously, so jealously loved as his own, he beholds not less but more his very own now that this Master and Lord is discerned as very God!

What marvellous variety of character is seen in the circle of the Twelve; and what depth of character is revealed in the lives of these comrades of Jesus!

We may thank God for the variety; and for the fact that such strength in variety appears in such plain, every-day men.

For, the Apostolate is the Church in miniature: inclusive and not exclusive; not an ecclesiasticism moulded into lifeless uniformity, but a family, full of the vitality of a very human humanity with its varied idiosyncrasies.

There are more Thomases than we think amid the host of Christ's chosen ones, — men and women who by inborn disposition are despondent, irresistibly inclined to look on the dark side, yet fine and sensitive souls who, because they are fine and sensitive, in silence suffer untold agonies in face of the facts of life. There is a dark side of human life, — a very dark side, and they see it more clearly and feel it more keenly than others see and feel it.

The pity of ordinary, cheerful persons for such men and women is ignorant and often impertinent.

Only those have the right to either pity or blame them who have themselves gone through the deep waters, because thus only can any one

criticise such souls with the sympathy needful for understanding. But, after all, the most of us can give them our sympathy. There are few of us who have never had our darkened moments, when the joy has been taken out of life by trouble or anxiety, when sorrow has clouded all life's brightness so that the days are a burden and the nights bring no rest, and life seems scarce worth living, and instead of hoping for the best we find ourselves fearing the worst.

Let us thank God if such times come but seldom and quickly pass. But the memory of the pain of them ought to compel sympathy with those who are constitutionally inclined toward the dark-sided view.

The correctives for such despondency, whether habitual or occasional, are not so simple and obvious as they may seem. It may be true, it often is true that things are not as bad as we imagine ; it is a fact that behind the clouds the sun is still shining. But the comfort to be had from these rather threadbare truths serves better after the trouble begins to

clear up than while the reality of its denser shadow rests upon us. A stronger corrective is needed, such a corrective as may be found in Duty. If ever there is a time when duty for duty's sake is precious and good for the soul, it is in the dark moments. When Thomas said, "Let us also go, that we may die with Him!" he plucked the dignity and the inspiration of high, courageous, and self-sacrificing resolve out of the mire of his slough of despond. The dignity of duty will grow upon us if we school ourselves to do it all the more carefully and faithfully when grief or despondency make duty seem least worth while. And the discipline of duty, stern though it may seem at such times, is needful for our very safety.

When a ship runs into a storm the captain orders all the other sails furled, but to the very last, through the very worst he keeps the close-reefed topsail or storm staysail set, to hold the ship's head up toward the wind and compel her to face rather than flee from the threatening waves. Something like that is what duty

does for us in the midst of the tempests that overtake our souls. Running before the wind is most dangerous of all; it gives the storm its opportunity to have its own way with us.

Our dark moments are those which ought to, which well may make us thankful for those obligations to others which at other times may appear simply troublesome. When life may not seem worth living for ourselves, then it may be seen to be most worth living for the sake of those near to us, those whom we love; and most worth living for the sake of our fellow-men, with whose griefs we now can sympathize.

But not even the corrective of duty can have its full and its complete effect until duty is linked fast to a faith in God that grasps Him and will not let Him go even when His smitings lame us.

Compare Thomas with his Master. In some respects they were not unlike. There was never any one more deeply pierced with the bitterness of human life than Jesus. Never did anyone see more clearly the dark facts of

the world. He bore in Himself the dreadful cross of our griefs and our sins. The prophet who pictured His coming and saw what it would mean named Him "the Man of Sorrows."

Yet He was never the man of gloom. In spite of the load which Jesus constantly carried His presence was never depressing or forbidding. The shadows of His own soul were never cast over others.

One of the most remarkable things about Jesus was His attractiveness. And this was felt not only by the good and spiritual, but by all sorts of people. Little children felt it; the poor, the rude, the ignorant, were drawn to Him. Publicans and sinners welcomed Jesus at their feasts. I doubt if they welcomed Thomas.

The secret of the attractiveness of Jesus was that He carried the burdens of His fellow-men and forgot Himself. Jesus never did things for Himself. He even neglected the luxury of the expression of His personal emotions. Only incidentally, in His brief and

seldom recorded prayers, or in words wrung from Him by the sins and sorrows of men, by His sympathy with their joys or sufferings do we discover His own personal feelings. The cheerfulness of Jesus did not come from what we lightly call "a happy disposition"; least of all was it the cheerfulness of insensibility. And it was never forced. Always natural, there was always something in it uplifting and attractive; and for a significant reason. The deeper secret of the attractiveness of Jesus was that, in His darkest moments His faith in His Father never wavered. He claimed God for His own even when upon the Cross He cried, "My God, why hast Thou forsaken me!" Jesus never doubted the victorious result which lay beyond His keenest griefs. For the joy that was set before Him He endured the Cross, despising the shame. The dark side of life, more distinct, more dreadful to Him than to any other who ever lived, never overcame Him. He never doubted the purpose of the Father that He Himself should be at last the conqueror

of earth's darkness. Even while the darkness of the world's sins and sorrows compassed Him most closely He called Himself "the Light of the World!"

Oh, Thomas, godly man, true disciple though you are, how far below your Master you must take your stand!

The trouble with Thomas, and with those who are kindred to him, is not so much their look upon the dark side; but the real trouble is that they feebly permit the darkness to hide God.

Thomas habitually looked about him and within himself, instead of lifting his eyes toward the Almighty Light which penetrates all mists and shadows.

So he went his self-darkened way, until that great moment when the Lord, in love for his true friend, gave him the vision of God revealed in the victory of the Suffering Christ.

The salvation of Thomas was his true comradeship with Jesus. He loved this Master who was his friend with a passionate love which by its very intensity reflected, and for the

moment intensified, all the gloom of his despondent nature. If the love of Thomas had been lavished on some mortal man or woman, it might well have proved his ruin. With such a disposition as his, any disaster to the one he loved would most likely have left him a hard cynic, or perhaps driven him crazy. But the love given to Jesus anchored his soul fast to the Conqueror of all darkness.

And one spark of honest love of Jesus will do more to save any of us than all the moral maxims or all the sound theology in the world. Because He, the Mightiest and Best, is still Our Brother, who so keenly craves our love that His heart leaps out to its feeblest flame and answers it a thousand-fold.

Then let us hold fast to the facts of Our Lord's nature and character; and while we confess our fears, our coldness, and our doubts, let us also courageously confess the strength of that victorious Love which could dissolve the gloom of Thomas in the vision of "My Lord and my God!"

WHEN RECKLESSNESS IS PRECIOUS

And David longed, and said, Oh that one would give me drink of the water of the well of Bethlehem, which is by the gate!

And the three mighty men brake through the host of the Philistines, and drew water out of the well of Bethlehem, that was by the gate, and took it, and brought it to David: nevertheless he would not drink thereof, but poured it out unto the Lord.

And he said, Be it far from me, O Lord, that I should do this: is not this the blood of the men that went in jeopardy of their lives?

2 Samuel xxiii. 15–17.

WHEN RECKLESSNESS IS PRECIOUS

"Thy will be done." So the Lord Jesus bids us pray. And with strange perversity we imagine that He is giving us only a proper prayer for the grace of submission to that dreadful Will whose doing must always make us suffer.

But the emphasis of this prayer is really not upon the suffering, but upon the *doing* of God's will; and upon its doing by men upon the earth with exultant eagerness, like that of those mighty angels in heaven who hold themselves in readiness to anticipate the very wish of God.

From the angels in heaven to the mighty men of David's band at the Cave of Adullam may seem a long descent; and yet in the story of their romantic devotion to their captain we have a fine illustration of the inner spirit of the petition in the Lord's Prayer, which bids

us pray, "Thy will be done on earth as it is done in heaven."

That was a strange company which gathered about David. David himself was not only an exile, but an outlaw driven from the court of Saul, who sought to kill him. At first he had found refuge with the Philistines; but the remembrance of his victory over their champion Goliath made them suspicious, and he felt himself unsafe in their country. "David therefore departed thence and escaped to the Cave Adullam. And when his brethren and all his father's house heard it, they went down thither unto him. And every one that was in distress, and every one that was in debt, and every one that was discontented, gathered themselves unto him; and he became a captain over them: and there were with him about four hundred men."

A motley company, it would seem. And the Cave of Adullam has become a byword expressive of the gathering together of political discontent. Yet the nucleus of a new and mighty kingdom was forming itself there.

The discontent of that time was disgust with the unreasonable and inefficient rule of a selfish despot. The distress was that of men driven to desperation by a tyranny unable to either keep peace with or conquer the nation's enemies; and the debtors may well have been men deprived by arbitrary exactions of the ability to meet their obligations.

We know that there were at least a few noble souls at the Cave of Adullam with David. Joab and Abishai and Ashael, three brothers who afterward became renowned captains, were apparently with him; and Abiathar, the priest of the Lord, whose father had been slain by Saul's command, was either there or soon afterward joined the company; and the prophet Gad was a visitor amongst them.

A man naturally attracts men of his own sort, and a man who is a born leader draws to himself spirits kindred with his own. The men who collected at the Cave of Adullam were men who saw in David the hope of their country, and the sort of devotion he could in-

spire is shown by the incident recorded in the text.

In order to measure this devotion rightly, we must remember that David was no king with rewards to bestow. He was a hunted outlaw with a price upon his head. There could scarcely be any selfish afterthought in anything any one did for David at that time. If men served him, this was because they loved him and trusted him.

The Cave of Adullam was in one of the ravines leading down from the Judean highlands toward the Dead Sea. It was not far from Bethlehem; and it is illustrative of the condition of the country under Saul's régime that such a commanding place as Bethlehem should be in possession of the Philistines and held by a garrison of invading oppressors.

Perhaps the fact that these enemies held his native town made David think the more tenderly and longingly of it. He remembered the well that was by the city gate, from which while a boy, he had so often quenched his thirst, — that well, the village meeting-place

of all the shepherds when he was himself a shepherd. What sweet memories clustered about it!

Water is not, for us, the scarce and precious thing that it was, and is still, to people of Eastern lands. And yet few of us — few, at least of those of us who were country or village born — fail to count among the precious memories of our youthful days the well or spring to which we used to go when thirsty.

It is a touch of nature which makes David kin with every wholesome soul, that when he was at the Cave of Adullam, where the water supply was doubtless scant and not over-good, he should have longed for a drink from the well that is by the gate at Bethlehem. One of the traits in David's character which make us love him is this strong love of sweet and simple things, — the love of green fields and starry skies and his boyhood's home and his shepherd life, which all through his great though stormy career stayed by him.

Just now David was homesick and heartsick, — homesick because heartsick. The Cave of

Adullam was a trying change from life in the royal court.

It was hard to be treated as an enemy by his king while his country's enemies were at the gate of his native town. He wished himself a shepherd lad once more, and his thought spoke in the words, "Oh that one would give me to drink of the water of the well that is by the gate of Bethlehem!"

I think he spoke to himself without a thought of any listener, though the great longing in his heart made him speak aloud. But some of his companions heard, and understood. They knew it was far from David's thought to order any man, or even ask any man to take the risk of going to that well. But their hearts felt for him. I think they said in undertone to each other, "How it would please the Captain if we could really give him a drink from the well at Bethlehem!" and there were three friends who looked into each other's faces and said, with common impulse, "We will do it!"

Perhaps the three were Joab and Abishai

and Beniah; or perhaps they were the other three afterward known as the mightiest of David's mighty men. It matters not; they were three heroes. They went quietly out of the camp, they broke through the Philistine guards, they cut their way into the outposts, they reached the well and drew the water, and then, with their hard-won treasure they fought their way back again through the host of their enemies and came down to Adullam and offered the gift of their perilous valor to David.

We can see them as they stood before him with faces flushed at the thought of their deed; we can almost hear them say, "Here, Captain, here is what you were wishing for; here is water from the well that is by the gate of Bethlehem!"

They were young men. Partly it was the love of adventure that sent them on their errand. They were proud of their prowess; their eyes flashed with the triumph of it as they held out the precious water-jar to their Captain. But they had done what they never

would have dreamed of doing had they not loved David. The sort of love they bore him is seen in the fact that they waited for no command, but willingly obeyed what they saw was a wish of his heart. And all the reward they sought was to make him glad.

But why is such a deed as this recorded, not once, but twice, in the Bible history? It was a reckless deed; the risk of it, the peril of sacrifice in it was altogether disproportioned to any useful service that could be rendered. Why was it worth while to tell it twice so that future ages should be sure to know it?

The answer is plain to those who can understand.

This was a service of love. It was an offering of romantic, unselfish, uncalculating friendship that went straight to David's heart and which he could never forget, nor could those who loved David allow it to be forgotten. David's power was built on just this sort of personal devotion. He was one of those rare souls who drew men's very souls to himself. This is a typical instance of the way in which

men were ready to serve him; and the real wealth and glory of his royalty was that royal heart in him which always gathered abundance of such service.

Royal also was his acceptance of the offering of the three heroes; and not the less so because he was not a king, but only captain of an outlaw band when it was rendered him. If they loved him before, they loved and reverenced him tenfold more afterward.

We can see him as he stood surrounded by the excited throng of his followers, with the three battle-stained young men before him holding out the water-jar. There is a glad flush of pride in his face, answering in sympathy the exultation in their faces; but his eyes moisten in tenderness, at once at the thought of their love for him and at the thought of the peril they had undergone. A brave man knows the cost of a brave deed. David takes the water-jar into his own hands. I almost think he raised it reverently toward his lips; and then suddenly he said, "I cannot drink it." And with a deeper reverence,

with a prayer or invocation, he poured out the precious gift as an offering to the only One worthy of such self-devotion. "He poured it out unto Jehovah, and he said: "Be it far from me, O Lord, that I should do this. Shall I drink the blood of the men that went in jeopardy of their lives?"

In the fulness of time there came to earth a son of David, the Child of a great prophecy and promise, whom David himself in one of his Psalms calls "Lord." In Him dwelt the Presence of that Holy One to whom David poured out the water brought at the peril of his friends from the well that is by the gate at Bethlehem.

His name is Jesus, and He is our Christ. The character of His person is such that He draws to himself a devotion even more unmeasured than that which was given to David.

There is a story of devotion to Jesus which, in spite of its contrasts, bears in the spirit of it a singular likeness to the deed of David's recklessly brave friends; and it is noteworthy

that this service was offered by a woman. It was when Mary broke the precious vase of costly ointment and anointed the feet of Jesus at the feast given in thanksgiving for the raising of her brother Lazarus from the dead.

In the gospel incident there is the same reckless, extravagant, uncalculating love that we see in David's companions. Both alike rendered a service strictly personal. What Mary did to Jesus was not done for His Cause, but for Himself; precisely as the water from the well at Bethlehem was won for David's very self alone.

At first sight it may seem that Mary was reckless only of property, while David's men risked their lives. But the criticism of Mary's act, even by some of the disciples, — and significantly by Judas, — is enough to show that she was closely watched. She was not an obscure person who could safely do such a deed of devotion without attracting attention and inviting personal risk. Mary and her sister Martha and her brother Lazarus were

well known in Jerusalem. It appears that they were connected by social ties with those very rulers of the Jews who were already plotting the death of Jesus. It is often more dangerous to offend your friends than to defy your enemies, especially when those "friends" are only social or party acquaintances. Mary's act was nothing less than worship of Him whom her powerful associates had marked for death. She offered far more than the costly vase of rare ointment. Her anointing only marked the fulness of the personal and daring devotion to Jesus that was seen shortly afterward when Mary with a few other women stood beside the Cross, from whence the disciples had fled. Her deed was extravagant — wasteful, if you will; Judas thought so. And it was dangerous; it exposed a young, delicately nurtured woman to the peril of that most deadly of all hatred, the peril of religious hatred. Moreover, so far as the result was concerned, it was seemingly useless.

But how did Jesus receive it? He not only accepted Mary's devotion; He praised her ap-

parently useless, her seemingly wasteful, her unmeasured, unpractical offering as He never praised anything else ever done by any one in His service. He declared: "Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached, there shall this also that this woman hath done be told for a memorial of her."

He made her deed immortal; and significantly He placed such service as that of Mary, extravagant, reckless, useless though it may be in the world's sight, above what men call "charity"! He placed it above giving to the poor! — just as David lifted the reckless daring of his three heroes into the sacredness of a religious act.

Surely there are lessons for us in these facts of divine history. And, first of all, there is enlightenment as to the true test of success in Christian doing.

We are forever tempted to abide by what is called the "practical" test. How wise people will look when they gravely tell you that this or that sort of Christian effort or sacrifice "does not pay!" With what an air of finality

they will assure you that it produces no results commensurate with the expenditure of life or labor or money! Christian missions to foreign lands in particular have always suffered from a constant running fire of such criticism. And, in fact, almost every form of supremely self-sacrificing devotion to Christ has had to endure the Judas argument of the waste of precious ointment.

But is this so-called practical test a true one? No! It is not. Tried in the light of the deed of David's friends, measured by the standard of Mary's offering, it is found woefully wanting; it shows itself but a grovelling, a shameful test.

The truth is, our plans, our work, our efforts are by themselves of little importance. The Lord lets us try to do things so that we may learn the ways of His service; and until He with His masterful skill finishes off and completes the ragged edges of our work, it amounts to nothing.

We talk entirely too much about "work *for* Jesus," as though we could really do anything

which adds to His power or His success! We ought to be thinking more about work *with* Christ and service *under* Christ. The spirit of our doing is of far more consequence than the things we do. It is less important that christian and churchly organization should be perfect, and christian effort have results to show that can be counted in figures or reckoned in dollars and cents, than that there should be in Christ's Church the spirit that is seen in David's mighty men or in Mary of Bethany.

When Jesus bids us pray, "Thy Will be done!" He puts no ineffectual prayer into our mouths, but with the prayer goes an implied pledge that the Will of Our Father shall surely be done upon this earth as it is done in heaven. And if we would be fit for a place in the ranks of that army marching through earth with the power of the Heavenly Hosts, we must catch their spirit. We must cease our impotent interpretation of God's Will as a hard and dreadful thing which must be suffered, and our impudent imagining that we can better His

Will by our puny doing. We must draw near to Our glorious Lord, and look up to Him, and let the charm of His Presence sink into our very souls, until, with reckless self-abandonment, our highest joy shall be to obey His wish without waiting for His command, until —

> "Our faith springs like the eagle
> Who soars to meet the sun,
> And cries, exulting unto Thee,
> 'O Lord, Thy will be done!'"

The Church of Jesus Christ can never afford to slight or undervalue the service of personal self-sacrifice. In fact the most extravagant, the most romantic self-devotion is just that which has proved itself richest in actual and visible results; as is witnessed by the career of Paul of Tarsus and a long line of martyr heroes of like self-devotion.

After all, there is but one thing we can give King Jesus. The silver and the gold and the product of the industry of men are already His by right. One thing alone is left us

for our very own, and that He craves and longs to receive from us as our free gift. That one thing is the heart's love of His brethren and His comrades in His Father's service.

MARY THE BLESSED

And Mary said,

My soul doth magnify the Lord,
And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour.
For He hath regarded the low estate of His handmaiden,
For, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me Blessed. — Luke i. 46–48.

MARY THE BLESSED

Save for two slight though significant remarks, this Hymn of Praise is the only recorded utterance of Mary the Mother of Jesus.

Can we take this Magnificat as an expression of her character? I believe we may most confidently do so. But we shall probably discover that the picture of Mary which arises out of the Magnificat is different from that to which we have been accustomed.

After the first impression of the music of this grand song has subsided sufficiently for reflection upon its thought and sentiment, we shall surely find ourselves asking questions.

To say nothing about the questions raised by the nature of such an utterance as a whole from such a person as Mary, what must we think when we hear her saying,

"He hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their heart.

He hath put down the mighty from their seats,
And hath exalted them of low degree.
The hungry He hath filled with good things;
And the rich He hath sent empty away."

How shall we account for this almost vindictive exultation over the defeat of the rich and mighty?

How can we explain such a feeling of almost fierce triumph in the heart of the gentle maiden who was the Mother of Jesus?

Perhaps you may say, "She does but echo the world-old protest of the down-trodden against oppression and the outcry of the poor against the rich."

If Mary was indeed nothing more than a simple peasant girl, then something of this sort is about all that can be said. But the expression of such a sentiment in such a form as that of this hymn does not come naturally from a simple peasant girl. Few things in Holy Scripture can compare with the deep-toned majesty of the Magnificat. There is in it a

conscious dignity — I had almost said, a proud defiance — scarcely matched by the Psalms of David. There is also a singular likeness in Mary's Song to some of the Psalms in which David exalts over his enemies.

I wonder if we sufficiently remember who Mary was, and recall as distinctly as we might that she is a descendant of David?

Doubtless you have noticed the difference between the genealogy in Matthew's Gospel which traces Joseph's descent from David and the genealogy given by Luke, so singularly worded at the beginning that it seems to imply that this is the pedigree of some one else than Joseph. There is a theory strongly maintained, though not very generally accepted, that this genealogy in Luke is in reality Mary's family tree.

But apart from the somewhat complicated argument concerning the names, there is one large consideration which cannot be lightly dismissed; which is that this is the record of the descent of the Son of Man not only from David, but through David up to Adam the

first son of God; and thus it seems scarcely appropriate to any one but Mary.

Beside all questions of the genealogy however, it is unquestioned that Mary and Joseph were not very distant cousins. They were both members of the same royal race.

It has been too hastily assumed that the family of David was, at the time when Jesus was born lost in utter obscurity.

Several facts seem to prove the contrary. It would be surprising if this family alone escaped the scrutiny of the carefully kept records by which the pedigree of every son of Israel was religiously preserved. That they did not escape is proved by the journey of Joseph and Mary to Bethlehem to be taxed — or enrolled. Joseph went from Nazareth to the city of David which is called Bethlehem because he — and Mary also — were of the house and lineage of David.

The house and lineage of David had indeed become hidden from public view; and yet the name of it was still a name to conjure with, as may be seen all through the course of the

life of Jesus. And it was a name to be dreaded by the corrupt creatures — kings and priests — who ruled in Jerusalem.

When the wise men came from the East with their story of the star, Herod was troubled and all Jerusalem with him. Doubtless Herod had the superstitious faith in astrology and in astrologers common to his time; but something more than the star troubled him. He was a shrewd, practical politician. He knew that the countryside was seething with an almost fanatical hope of a coming Messiah. He must have known that the ancient prophecies promised a Messiah of the house of David. When, in answer to his demand the obsequious scribes told him that Christ was to be born in Bethlehem, I do not think Herod was surprised. We can almost hear him saying within himself, "I thought so. That is the City of David; that is the very nest of this dangerous family. And just now they are all assembled there for the census which has been ordered." The devilish cunning of a great fear was in that bloody command to slay all the male children

from two years old and under in Bethlehem and the coasts thereof.

Yes, Herod was a practical man ; and there had been others like him through several centuries past. There were strong reasons why the descendants of David should keep themselves in the shadow. It is easy to understand why the family of David should not be conspicuous.

Those who fall from a high place fall farthest, and the memory of a lost inheritance easily serves to unman and unnerve. Disaster, poverty, neglect, the very peril of a great name, had done its work. Rarely could any sign of princely quality be discerned in this once royal but now crushed race. But here and there some royal soul rose above all disaster and degradation and kept its lofty poise and was inwardly ennobled by outward loss. Daniel, the captive boy, afterward prime minister in Babylon, was one of them, and I believe we must reckon Mary among these glorious spirits.

Now, is it not wonderful, is it not beautiful,

that in the crisis moment of its history, the one member of the fallen house of David in whom David's spirit survived should have been a woman, — a young, poor, inconspicuous girl!

We have drifted into an ignorant sentimentalism concerning the mother of Jesus. It is so pretty, so picturesque, to imagine her as a simple, unsophisticated peasant maiden! And the mindless Madonnas of the semi-pagan Italian Renaissance, the exquisite dolls of Raphael and his contemporaries, — how mightily they have helped to fasten this unbiblical notion upon the Christian world! Even theology in its presumptuous effort to uphold the sovereign grace of God by insistence on the humility of the channel of His greatest gift has helped our blindness.

But we have our Bibles. We know, or we ought to know, something of the severe grandeur of those Christ prophecies upon which the Christ hope of Mary's day rested, — those prophecies which we may be sure Mary knew by heart and had pondered deeply, for her Magnificat breathes the very spirit of them.

And we know, if we have studied our Bible to any purpose, that while God often chooses the lowly in earthly station, He chooses the high-souled for the ministry of His great grace.

David was only a shepherd lad, but he came of grand stock. The blood of Ruth and Boaz was in him, and even in his boyhood the kingly soul within him shone out.

The kingly soul was in Mary. She was a true child of David. When she magnifies the Lord and rejoices in God her Saviour, is not her heart swelling with triumph because David's blood is coming to its own again? Does she not exult because its long night of eclipse is beginning to be touched with the finger of a dawn of vindication and victory? When she says, "His mercy is from generation to generation upon them that fear him!" is she not mindful of the mighty *promise*, the promise of the Lord to David and to his seed? Does she not feel the fulfilment of that promise in herself and to her family?

If we would picture Mary as the Gospel

pictures her, as she really was and not as sentiment and tradition picture her, we must think of her as an Old Testament saint. Something of the character of her namesake Miriam, sister of Moses may be traced in Mary; more of the character of Ruth, her ancestress; or of Hannah mother of Samuel, whose thanksgiving at the birth of her son Mary's Magnificat seems to echo.

Mary was a large-minded woman, deeply imbued with that patriotic hatred of wrong to her people which is so passionately voiced in the Psalms of David, her forefather.

And Herod, the Idumean Usurper, — Herod called "The Great" because of the splendor of his powers of wickedness, — occupied the throne of David!

And Annas, grown rich by corrupt financing of the Temple revenue, — Annas, the contemptible creature of Roman intrigue, — sat in the High Priest's place! Can you wonder that this high-souled Hebrew maiden, this daughter of David, magnifying the Lord because the King of Righteousness is about

to be born of her exults and says, as she remembers Herod and remembers Annas,—

"My Lord hath shewed strength with His arm;
He hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their heart.
He hath put down the mighty from their seats and hath exalted them of low degree.
He hath filled the hungry with good things,
And the rich hath He sent empty away!"

Here is the courage of that high faith which grasps the future results contained in present facts and sees the end from the beginning.

Mary's Magnificat glows with the far-reaching vision, the sublime patience, the passionate faith in the promise shining star-like in the beyond, which is the finest characteristic of the Hebrew race, which made Abraham magnificent and changed Jacob's name to Israel.

This prophetically regal spirit suggests itself throughout the life of Mary; and by a strange paradox it is just this which makes her such an elusive character in the Gospel history.

There is a queenliness, imperious, self-asserting, greedy of power and applause. It is not the highest sort. It clouds the womanly qualities; nay, it belittles the highest humanity of its possessor. We see it in Elizabeth of England whose unquestioned greatness is so marred by exasperating littlenesses. The highest queenliness shows itself in an inborn dignity that rises above both prosperity and adversity, and in a soul centred not in the personal gains, but in the solemn duties of high position.

Mary was reticent. Just once she opens the floodgates of her thoughts in the winged words of the brief but majestic Magnificat. After the birth of her Holy Son we scarcely hear her speak.

The Shepherds come to Bethlehem with their wondrous story of the heavenly vision, and everybody's tongue is loosed in talk. But Mary kept these things and pondered them in her heart. To her "these things" were too great for talk. They made her silent in the thoughtful dignity of a holy reserve.

Hers was a magnificently difficult position,—

mother of Him who was the Christ of God and King of Mankind, yet utterly destitute of all the earthly trappings which have always seemed necessities for royalty.

It is not the easiest thing in the world to sustain the dignity of high station with all the advantage of abounding wealth and acknowledged social position; but only souls of finest temper can sustain and adorn lofty station amid deprivation.

Yes! Mary was a peasant woman. She lived in a poor little house, destitute of almost everything that we would call comfort. Her earthly husband was the village carpenter. Doubtless she did her own housework and cared for her baby with never a nurse or servant to help her.

But she was a peasant woman by accident, by force of cruel circumstances. By birth she was of the blood royal, and by nature and the grace of God she was queenly in soul, endowed with a character suited to her high degree.

We gaze with wondering pity upon the manger at Bethlehem and the poor cottage at

Nazareth. But to Mary I believe these things were only incidents of small moment. Not complaint against her present deprivations, but indignation because the rights of her race are usurped by the rich and mighty is the note which sounds in the invective of the Magnificat, and the silences of Mary are those of a soul detached from the petty considerations of earthly condition. It was enough for her that God Almighty, her King and the Lord of her heart, had made her the mother of His Son. That overtopped all else. She knew and she exulted in the prophetic knowledge that thereby the ages would prove how He scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts and put down the earthly mighty from their seats. Her soul was fed with heavenly food, and she could look down calmly upon bloody Herods and corrupt High Priests.

If Mary could have stepped from her humble home in Nazareth in her peasant garb into the midst of the royal court, or into some proudly fashionable circle, would she have cringed with shame and embarrassment?

Nay! I believe she would have stood, reticent, reserved, but unabashed, unmindful of her poor clothes or her lowly social position, with lofty unconsciousness of worldly accidents exhaling from her noble self an innate, queenly dignity that would have compelled profound respect.

After the Magnificat we hear no faintest shadow of complaint of her earthly condition from Mary. To care for her Blessed Child with her own hands amid earthly deprivations was, for her, no hardship but the highest of all holy employment.

Mary is the type and the flower of sacred motherhood.

How much of the character of Jesus was derived from His mother? His human nature comes from her. He is our Brother because He is the Son of Mary. Great men have usually had great mothers. Was Jesus an exception? We cannot think so.

The Jews had high ideas of the importance of the mother's place in the teaching of children. Mary would surely not fall below these

ideals; and the earliest and therefore most vital lessons of Jesus were learned at her knee. It is the received opinion that Joseph died while Jesus was yet a boy. Much of the father's duty in teaching the Scripture must have fallen upon Mary. Did you ever notice Jesus' familiarity with the Psalms of David, and the mingled reverence and exultation with which He uses them?

For thirty years Jesus was His mother's Son, dwelling with her for His chief, almost His only near companion.

And it is possible to trace characteristics of His mother in Jesus. There was the same quiet, almost stern dignity; the same deep, meditative thoughtfulness; even the reticence of Mary is not absent in the character of Jesus. We do not so readily realize this because we are so enchained with His speech. But did you ever notice the moments when men try to make Him talk and He answers not a word, or the way in which He disdains to satisfy curiosity, or the sternness with which He silences impertinence?

If Jesus can be said to owe anything to any one on earth in the moulding of His character, then it is to His mother.

Mary was a noble woman; but out of the very loftiness of her nature and out of the greatness of the place into which God had called her, a sorrow came which in the depths of its pathos sets her apart from all other mothers.

When Jesus, an infant of eight days, was presented in the Temple with the sacrifice required by the law, old Simeon, the just and devout man, took the Child in his arms and blessed him, and then said to Mary: "Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel, and for a sign that shall be spoken against. Yea, and a sword shall pierce through thine own soul also."

The moment when most evidently and most deeply the sword pierced the soul of Mary has been seized by the unknown writer of one of the greatest and the most poignant of Christian hymns, the "Stabat Mater," —

"At the Cross her station keeping
Stood the mournful mother weeping,
Close to Jesus at the last.
Through her soul of joy bereaved,
Bowed with anguish, sorely grieved,
Now at length the sword hath passed."

But, in truth, the sword began to enter Mary's soul long before the Cross was reached. Very early in the life of Jesus she was compelled to understand that this Child of hers had in Him a nature which set Him apart from His mother.

When, after anxious search Jesus, the boy of only twelve years is found in the Temple listening to the reverend doctors and asking them questions, the mother's heart speaks as Mary says, "Son, why hast thou dealt thus with us? Behold thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing!" The mother's heart speaks, but it speaks in Mary's character with no hysterical gush, with dignified, almost stern rebuke. And one word in her rebuke brings startling reproof in answer from her Son: "How is it that ye sought me? Wist ye not

that I must be about *my* Father's business?" Such a woman as Mary could make no reply to such an answer; but we are told that "His mother kept these things in her heart."

At Cana of Galilee the proud reticence of Mary's compressed utterance suggests not so much a prayer as a command, "They have no wine!" We can almost see her thought, which seems to say, "It is for you to supply the want." The reply of Jesus is a reminder of the difference and the distance made by His Divine mission between Himself and His dearly loved mother.

Again we see Mary, though we do not hear her speak — at least, not in words of her own. In the midst of the teaching of Jesus, at a critical moment of His controversy with Scribes and Pharisees His mother and His brethren, alarmed for His safety, imagining Him beside Himself, try to take Him away from His work. They sent a message to Him through the crowd, saying, "Thy mother and Thy brethren stand without desiring to speak with Thee." And once again, a most

pathetic, a heart-broken and heart-breaking rebuke comes from Jesus: "Who are my mother and my brethren? For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my mother and my sister and my brother!"

There are women who take a weak pride, often a garrulous pride, in the superiority of their sons, and are only pleased when they are ruled or even rebuked by their children. Mary was not in this class. She felt herself the mother of the Messiah, the Queen Mother. With her strong character it was not easy to take a submissive place beneath Him and yield her place beside Him. And reserved, reticent and thoughtful natures like hers crave the confidence, even more than the submission of those nearest them. The sense of separation between her soul and the soul of her Holy Son was a sharp and enduring pang. Moreover, with her clear and penetrating vision she must have seen more clearly than others saw, that He was treading a road that could lead only to sacrifice. In the very blessedness

of the life of her Son there was keenest agony for her mother's heart!

But the nobility of Mary's character is seen in the silent dignity, the patient humility and lofty, self-effacing loyalty with which she accepted the blessing and the burden of her unique and trying position. There is a pathos in the very greatness of this great mother which must pierce our souls in sympathy when we think of her. I almost think the "Stabat Mater" fails to picture Mary truly when it tells of her weeping and groaning beside the Cross. No weak woman could have stood as she stood beneath that awful Cross. It would seem truer to think of her as tearless in the depth of her grief. And the most touching incident of the Cross is when the dying Christ speaks to His mother and commends her to the care of His beloved disciple John, who doubtless led her away at once.

We have a final glimpse of Mary after the Resurrection of Jesus. She appears in the Upper Room with the other holy women and

the disciples and brethren of Jesus. We see her, not above, but in the midst of the saints as one of them; and there the gospel history leaves her.

We may not give her a higher place, but let us at least give her that which is her own. Do not we Protestants too easily fall into excess of protestation when Mary's name is mentioned?

We may not worship her; and yet is not a unique reverence due her? For the sake of her Holy Son; for her own sake, because of her noble character, because Holy Motherhood is crowned in Mary, all generations shall call her Blessed.

I WILL DECLARE THY NAME

I will declare Thy name unto my brethren : in the midst of the congregation will I praise Thee.

PSALM XXII. 22.

I WILL DECLARE THY NAME

Just what particular sorrows of his own or sufferings of his nation the writer of this Psalm attempted to describe, we are not told and we can never know. But for us this matters nothing; for us the Twenty-second Psalm speaks with only one voice, the voice of Jesus upon the Cross. It is a wonderful Psalm. It does not profess to be prophecy, and yet it presents an amazingly realistic picture of that crucifixion of Messiah which took place centuries after it was written. It is more than description; it is the awful expression of the experience of the sufferer. The very first words of the Psalm are the cry of Jesus upon the Cross: "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken me!" And we hear the sufferer say: "They pierced my hands and my feet . . . they part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture!"

No wonder John and the other Evangelists who saw what took place on Calvary, said: "This was done that the scripture might be fulfilled."

More and more impressive this Psalm becomes as we study it. For example, in those other Psalms where we hear as in this one, the cry of a sufferer, there is always also the confession of personal sin. Nothing of the sort can be found here. This sufferer cries to God for strength, for help, but not for pardon. What he endures is the result of the iniquity of others, and not of his own. This is the sinless Christ who cries, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken me!"

Another significant fact is the triumphant close of this sufferer's song. In the very midst of his agony he suddenly perceives that God to whom he cries has heard him and has not forsaken him. A vision of the future glows before his dying eyes. He sees how generations yet unborn shall be blessed by his sacrifice: "All the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the Lord: and all

the kindreds of the nations shall worship before Thee. . . . They shall come, and shall declare His righteousness unto a people that shall be born, that He hath done this." We might well give this Psalm the title of "Cross and Crown."

But just where the tone of the song changes, where the plaint of agony is silenced by the vision of victory, we hear an exclamation which seems to spring to his lips from a revelation which has flashed into the mind of the sufferer. He sees that his suffering is not personal affliction; he beholds its purpose. In what he endures and in its result he is declaring God's name: "I will declare Thy Name unto my brethren: in the midst of the congregation will I praise Thee!" And is not this verily the largest meaning of the Cross of Jesus?

According to our point of view we may see various things in the Cross. We may see the constancy and courage of the greatest of all martyrdoms; we may see the highest example of the most perfect love; we may see the final

atonement for human sin. But above all else, including all else, we must see that the Christ upon the Cross declares the Name and the Nature of the Holy One. And if you would know how large a meaning is here, you must turn to the Epistle to the Hebrews, in the second chapter, where this Psalm is quoted, and read: ". . . We see Jesus . . . because of the suffering of death crowned with glory and honour, that He by the grace of God should taste death for every man. For it became Him, for whom are all things, and through whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings . . . for which cause he is not ashamed to call them 'brethren,' saying,

"'I will declare Thy name unto my brethren:

"'In the midst of the congregation will I sing Thy praise.'"

And always, when we gaze upon that Cross, we shall see that round about and above it shines a light which never was on land or sea,

a glory not of this world, a revelation of the name and nature of the Ever Living and Holy God.

Not without reason does Christendom observe, not only the day of Christ's death, but the last week of His life on earth, because the full meaning of His sacrifice, the way in which His Cross declares God's Name begins to appear with the entry of Jesus into Jerusalem. Up to that moment we have seen Him as the lowly prophet of Nazareth, but now God's chosen King is about to be proclaimed.

Look at that procession winding down the slopes of Olivet! See the people spreading their garments on the ground before Jesus, waving palm branches in prophetic token of victory. Hear their cry:

"Hosanna to the Son of David!"

"Blessed be the King that cometh in the Name of the Lord!"

An idealizing religious sentiment has, for us, obscured the real meaning of that moment. But those people knew, or thought they knew, precisely what they were doing. To them

the ancient prophecies were more than poetical figures of speech; they were sure promises bearing in their glowing words not only religious but also political assurances. Moreover, the signs of the times seemed to point to a speedy fulfilment of the promise of Messiah's coming; and when Jesus appeared at Bethany the wavering expectations awakened by His career suddenly crystallized. The man and the hour seemed to have met. All Israel was gathering in vast multitude for the Passover feast, and here was He who could feed five thousand with five loaves and two fishes, — yea, and raise Lazarus from his grave. The King, the Son of David, had come. His kingdom must be proclaimed. With shouts of "Hosanna" they escorted Him toward the gates of the Holy City.

Within the city, too, there was excitement. They saw the procession. They said, "Who is this?" The people said it; the priests and rulers said it. And when the answer came, "This is Jesus!" some feared, and others hoped he would put forth His mighty power

and sweep away the rule of priests and scribes and Romans and reign King over them all.

But Jesus! — what did it mean to Him? Not what either rulers or multitude imagined. No visions of earthly glory shone before His eyes. He saw clearly what the end would be. The shadow of the Cross which had followed Him so long, now loomed up near and awful. Yet none the less He knew Himself the King. Neither in weakness nor by any deceit did He permit the cry of "Hosanna to the Son of David!" He knew that He was the son of David, and heir to the kingdoms of the world; yea, God's anointed one, the Christ. It was right He should be proclaimed; the homage they were giving was but His due.

When the Pharisees asked Him to rebuke the enthusiasm of His disciples, He answered:

"I tell you that if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out!" not only Israel, but the world, yea, the very ground beneath His feet, cried out for earth's coming King.

But His kingdom was utterly different from

any that men had ever conceived — yes, different from any kingdom men have even yet learned to understand. It was a kingdom which declared God's name and nature; a kingdom of heavenly truth and everlasting righteousness and infinite love. All the more, therefore, was it needful that He should go into Jerusalem and toward His cross with the shouts of "Hosanna!" and the great word, "Son of David!" echoing from the multitude. Israel must know, the world must know, who this is to whom they are about to give a Crown of Thorns and a Cross.

The words and deeds of Jesus in this last week of His earthly life are in striking contrast to the things He said and did before. There is no Sermon on the Mount, no teaching of the principles of love and righteousness, nor any parables like that of The Sower and the Seed. There is, instead, the fearful parable of The Vineyard, and that of The King's Son, and of The Ten Virgins, and the Final Judgment scene. There is the terrible denunciation of the Pharisees, and the solemn

prediction of the destruction of Jerusalem, and the prophecy of His own Second Coming. The voice of Jesus is no longer that of a teacher; it is the voice of a king sitting in judgment, declaring God's awful name and His sure justice. Jesus was crucified because He was the King, God's King, God's Christ. The Passover pilgrims were enraged because He would not proclaim a political revolution such as they desired and hoped for. Scribes and priests could not endure the thought of a king who was from God, who would not consult or be ruled by them, who demanded purity and righteousness and cast out the money-changers from God's House. The Romans had no use for a king who came in any other way than with the power of the mailed fist.

"Away with Him!" "Crucify Him!" All of them either joined in that cry or consented to it. Human pride, human greed, human selfishness, yea, human sin, mingled in that fearful cry. All the hatred of God's righteousness, all the contempt for His Holiness and His spirituality, all the earthliness

and meanness and cruelty, all the iniquity that is in man, gave tongue in that cry.

"Shall I crucify your king?" said Pilate. And they answered, "We have no king but Cæsar!"

So this world has ever said. The only kingship the world confesses is the kingship of brute force or the kingship of material possessions, — money or power; something the flesh can see and touch and handle, and something the flesh must bow down to. Even today men ask in derision, "Where is your unseen God? what can he do?" Jesus came declaring God's name, and the world cried, "Crucify Him!"

Verily they knew not what they did; for they were enthroning God's Christ! The iniquity of us all is heaped upon Him, and He bears it, not because He must, but because He wills to bear it, — not in anger, but in Divine love. He is declaring God's name; He suffers for our sin; He is the perfect sacrifice.

Perhaps our first thought of the Cross is

the pity of it, the sorrow of it, the dreadful suffering of its victim. And there is little danger that we shall make too much of this. On the contrary, the Cross appears in such a distant past; its result has so greatly glorified the Cross, that we have lost sight of its real and unspeakable horror. For the mere bodily pain of it, burning at the stake would be, in comparison, a quick and easy death. But that was not all. No punishment ever invented by the fiendishness of man was so cruel, and none so inhuman in what it stood for.

Crucifixion declared the crucified unworthy of the name of man. Crucifixion was a dog's death; the infliction of it was the brutal expression of the feeling that the masses of mankind were as dirt beneath the feet of the favored few, — yea, beneath even the poor meed of pity. A Roman citizen, no matter what his crime, could not be crucified. Only slaves — and the world of that day was full of slaves — or barbarians, only the lowest criminals of the common herd could be crucified. And yet crucifixion was a fearfully com-

mon punishment. "The shame of the Cross" was only too well known to people of that day. Can you imagine anything more frightful than the prospect of such a death to such a person as Jesus?

Yet He faced it, not only bravely but willingly, and His acceptance of this horrible death was in itself a declaration of God's name to his brethren, because it was such an acceptance of the burden of human brotherhood as never before or since has been witnessed in this world.

Has human pride, in its daring yet despicable sin, mounted so high that it denies human kinship with the lowly, the oppressed, the degraded, and treads them under foot, and shuts all heart of compassion, and condemns these repudiated brethren to a pitiless and inhuman death?

Have men denied their fellow-men, and thus denied their Father, God?

Then our Christ, the Son of the Heavenly Father, the stainless man in whom even base Pilate could find no fault at all, takes His

place alongside the helpless and despised, — yea, even in that dog's death by which men most cruelly showed their contempt for brother men! Along with the slave, the wretched, the outcast, He goes with them to the Cross, and there proclaims Himself their brother and thus declarês God's Name!

A new sacredness of human life has been felt in the world, a new idea of human rights has dawned before the eyes of men since that moment when the Cross of Jesus rose on high with its new vision of God and of the love of the Heavenly Father for mankind.

But let no one imagine that this exhausts the meaning of the Cross of Jesus. The message of that Cross comes not to the downtrodden only; but to every one of us, to each human soul the Cross declares God's Name with awful intimacy.

One of the most remarkable incidents of the Crucifixion is that of the Dying Thief. As if to accentuate the shame of the Cross Jesus was not permitted to suffer alone. He was numbered with the transgressors, — cruci-

fied between two robbers. Doubtless they had belonged to one of those cut-throat bands which infested such highways as that leading from Jerusalem down to Jericho. Both were desperate characters, but there was a difference between these two companions of the suffering Christ. One of them in his agony reviled Jesus. But the other, answering, rebuked him saying, "Dost thou not fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation. And we indeed justly: for we receive the due reward of our deeds." Think of that man enduring the slow, the frightful, the deadly torture of the cross, yet confessing, "We indeed justly: this is the due reward of my deeds." Think what those deeds must have been as they rose before his memory in his dying hour, and then think of the honesty of that confession!

Now turn to priests and people crowding about the suffering Christ bleeding from unjust scourging, crowned in cruel mockery with thorns as He stands before Pilate's judgment seat. Hear them cry, "Away with Him!" "Crucify Him!" Set them side by side, —

people and priests on the one hand, the dying robber on the other,—set them before a higher Judgment Seat than that of Pilate, and answer, Which will be accounted the worst? Whose sin will appear the deepest?

But remember, also, in that crowd crying, "Crucify Him!" there were men whose every-day life had been up to that moment as good as yours or mine, — men who had never done anything disgraceful, who paid their debts and were honest, kind, and charitable. And by their sin the sinless Christ was numbered with the transgressors, nailed to the Cross!

It was human nature, — the nature that is in you and me, with its dark possibilities of evil; it was human nature truly confessed by the dying robber, truly uncovered by conscientious Israelites crying, "Crucify Him!" it was the *Sin* which is in us all that brought Jesus to His Cross!

There is an awful meaning in that Cross. The lifted up Son of Man, the crucified Son of God, by His blood and suffering uncovers

the blackest depths of human sin and brings our inner selves openly before the white light of Eternal Righteousness.

And yet most wonderfully this very judgment becomes the most convincing of all proof of the love of God for men.

He who suffers on the Cross is more than a martyr. The judgment which, silently yet with awful clearness He declares, falls not on those who deserve it but upon Himself, the willing victim. The stainless Jesus, the Lamb of God, the perfect sacrifice, bears *our* sins in His own body on the tree. The iniquity of us all was laid upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed.

We sometimes say, and say it coldly, in conventional religious phrase, "Jesus died for us." But remember; recall that Cross as it really was. What your Christ suffered there, was it something cheap? What He endured for you, was it anything easy? Think of the dreadful cost of the Cross to the Sinless Jesus — yes, and to God His Father; remember how God's Name is declared on that Cross,

and how the very sin in you is responsible for the suffering of the Christ; think of the judgment declared and of the judgment endured there by God's only begotten and well-beloved Son; think of the love that could give that Son for your salvation!

And then say no more, "Jesus died for us," but with honest confession, like that of the dying robber, say, "Jesus died for *me!*"

THE RESURRECTION AND THE LIFE

Jesus said unto her, I am the Resurrection and the Life. — John xi. 25.

THE RESURRECTION AND THE LIFE

WHAT a daring word!

Remember who said it; recall His circumstances. He is the rejected Christ. In peril of His life He has returned from the hither side of Jordan into the land of the Jews, who seek to kill Him. At the call of Mary and Martha, His beloved friends, He has come, — and apparently too late; for Lazarus is dead. He stands before that helpless, hopeless grief so fearfully common, — the grief we all have to meet, before which we are dumb. The dead body of the brother of His friends — yea, the body of His own friend — has been committed to the tomb and covered with the great stone. The tomb is in the midst of hundreds of other tombs, a single instance amid myriads which prove death's power and man's helpless mortality; and He says, "I am the Resurrection and the Life!"

Scarcely less daring is the faith witnessed on every Easter morning by thousands of believers in Jesus. As the sun lights up each continent and island, in every language of every race on earth, they confess Him who nineteen hundred years ago declared, "I am the Resurrection and the Life!"

So we confess Him, and joyfully acclaim His word as truth. Through all these centuries, on every morning of every first day of the week, and specially on the Easter morning, this faith has been proclaimed.

And it has been a prolific faith. At first a little band, the personal friends and followers of Jesus, held it, preached it, and the faith spread far and wide. It revolutionized the world; it changed men's ideas of life and of death; it placed life above death; it gave life the conquering, the victorious place.

Mightily the faith has grown. From the Syrian hills, like a miraculous sunrise it has spread westward over land and sea, and from the farthest west it has reached out again toward the Orient till it has encircled the world. Em-

pires have fallen, new civilizations have arisen, knowledge has broadened and deepened; but through all changes this one Voice has been heard saying, "I am the Resurrection and the Life!" The faith is sublime, not in itself alone, not only in the astounding thing it proclaims, but in the way in which it has triumphed and still triumphs over all appearances.

The world goes on as always, in its everlasting procession of changes, with its ceaseless succession of beginnings and endings. Life, as we see it, as we know it through our bodily senses is as short, as uncertain as ever. Death is no less busy than in the days when Jesus stood beside the tomb of Lazarus. The old law of decay and dissolution and earth to earth and dust to dust remains. Men depart out of this life as from the beginning they have departed, and return no more. No news is borne to our eyes or our ears from the darkness of the beyond. To all appearance there is no beyond. It would seem the natural, the common-sense conclusion that life is nothing

more than the little span of existence which we know here on earth. The word of Him who says, "I am the Resurrection and the Life," flies in the face of apparently universal experience and of all most evident appearance.

The faith in that word witnessed through nineteen centuries can be called nothing less than sublime,—sublime in its steadfastness; in its ever increasing volume; in its ever widening and deepening growth; in its hold upon men of all sorts, from the most ignorant who have least beside appearance and experience to guide them, up to the most learned and thoughtful who can best appreciate the force of experience and the reality which is in appearance.

In the midst of a world that lives by what it sees and can touch and handle, here is a faith that rises superior to appearance and experience, and will not be smothered, and does not fade, but always above the din of the business of this present life with its supreme concern for the here and the now, with its anxious care for the present wants of perishing bodies, in defiance of the ever-present death, hears and

believes the voice which says, "I am the Resurrection and the Life."

And this is the more remarkable because the faith has never been universally accepted. Always, from the beginning, men counted shrewd, wise, clear-headed, have argued against it the evident, easily understood argument. Against a tremendous inertia of the things that are seen and the reasoning so readily drawn from them, the reasoning which lies upon the surface of all appearance, this faith has persisted. To one point of light it ever turns, — to the stone rolled away from the empty sepulchre and the living Presence of the Lord, who said, "I am the Resurrection and the Life!" To that glowing light faith ever turns, and rests confident and unconquerable.

In truth, mankind has never been satisfied with the appearances, and no arguments drawn thence have ever brought content. From the earliest beginning heart and flesh have cried out for the Living God, and humanity has felt that some inheritance larger than any possible to earthly experience is rightfully its own.

Always men have tried to pierce the shadows of the beyond ; but always with a half-despairing trust, with a painfully uncertain hope, until He came who said, " I am the Resurrection and the Life ! "

And the hearts of men have leaped toward Him and toward His word because there is in it no " perhaps," — because He leads toward no wavering shadow of uncertainty, but calm, clear, positive in its far-reaching tone of almighty power, they hear the Christ of God saying, " I am the Resurrection and the Life : he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live : and whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die ! "

This word of Jesus is as notable for what it does not say as for what it says. He does not speak of " another life," nor of a distant heaven. He is almost contemptuous toward death. His word glows with the fire of overmastering, present, living, and real *life*. He is the Resurrection because He is the Life. Death cannot hold Him or His, because there is in Him a death-destroying force of life ; and whosoever

liveth believing in Him receives this conquering life against which death is helpless.

I believe we are wrong when, in the old sense of that much-abused word, we call the resurrection of Jesus "a miracle." I believe that His resurrection was natural — for such a Person as He — and that the really wonderful thing in His earthly career was His death.

Life is known to us only in fragments. Life is never finished; it is always a broken column. And yet in these fragments there is a wonderful persistence of life, an unending series of resurrections which constantly suggest what life might be in its perfection.

A life unbroken because perfect is something we can only imagine, but we do know that the force of it would be something beyond our reckoning. It would be far easier to imagine its possibilities than to fix its limits.

But is not just this the life which we see in the person of Jesus? "In Him was *Life*." "Eternal life," He calls it, — not simply because it goes on forever, but because it comes out of, and is one with the life of the Eternal God.

In the full and flawlessly perfect humanity of Jesus, the unbroken and limitless power of life as it comes fresh and untainted from the bosom of the Father is manifested. He is the "Light of men," who interprets to us the power and blessing of our original, unmarred birthright. Only by accommodation to the weak comprehension of our imperfect, fragmentary life can the works of Jesus be called "miracles." He called them "signs," and they are — if we do but use "natural" in its larger sense — the natural outgoings of such a nature with such real life as His.

And so the really mysterious thing in the earthly career of Jesus was His death.

It is significant that death came to Him by no ordinary process of decay or dissolution. A young man, in full flower of life, He was "cut off out of the land of the living." It is also significant that He Himself says of His life, "No man taketh My life from Me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again."

But the reason for His death, the purpose of it, is one that moves us to our inmost soul. In fellowship with us, His brethren; in communion with us who must die, He tasted death and bore our load of sorrow and of sin.

The resurrection of Jesus was the reassertion of His nature. And it was more. Resurrection had to be because there had been death. And as His death was fellowship with us, His resurrection becomes our fellowship with Him in the victory of conquering life. He is the Resurrection because He is the Life; and His resurrection is not alone His, but also ours. The resurrection of Jesus the Christ is the living, actual, experienced Gospel of Eternal Life for His brethren.

And that is why we say with mighty gladness in our hearts, "Christ is Risen!" That is why Easter is the most profoundly joyful day in all the year. It is the memory of the great, living, fulfilled pledge of eternal life to whosoever liveth believing in Him; it is the

day that commemorates the sunrise of unbroken life upon this world.

Can you wonder that those who have caught one glimpse of that unspeakable blessing hold fast to it?

We cannot grasp all that Jesus meant when He said, "I am the Resurrection and the Life!" — not now. The full interpretation of His glorious word can come only in the ripeness of a stage of eternal life which is not reached in this world. But its early sunrise sends a warm glow of the light of truth across this world, which gives the lie to all the groping, close-to-the-ground experiences and all the murky appearances of the world's darkness.

When one ray from the Presence of the Risen, the Living Christ, who is the Light of men, has shone into the soul of a man, then forever after everything is changed for him. Life has received a new interpretation. A corner of the veil which hides Eternity from Time has been lifted. We may go our way, our busy way of worldly work and anxious

care, letting the glitter of the things that are seen blind us and the noise of the earthly, unbelieving babble drown all heavenly thoughts, — for the moment. But underneath it all the memory of that glimpse of reality and of eternity remains stamped indelibly upon our souls. We cannot lose its impression. It has forever made our whole view of things different.

Perhaps we are afraid of the light and of its consequences. And well we may be afraid while we persist in living in the Far Country of Forgetfulness, squandering our birthright as children of God and of Eternal Life.

But down in our hearts we know that we would not really lose that hope, — no, not for worlds!

The whole point of view of this world's life has been changed, since that first-day morning when the Lord, who is the Resurrection and the Life came forth from the tomb, victor over death, with resumed powers enlarged by His fellowship with the sufferings of mankind.

The light which has guided human progress

and enlarged the bounds of knowledge and shown the way for freedom and truth is the light that shines from the empty sepulchre forth from which the Risen, Living Christ has come. It is the light of Life because it is the light of eternity shining into time. The meaning of this world, and of our passage through it, of our years and days and moments of time has been immensely enlarged by the Risen Christ, who said, "I am the Resurrection and the Life."

We remember His victory and His conquest. Has the meaning of it come anew to our souls? To-morrow, when we go forth to our work or our pleasure, are we going to let the doors of earthliness shut in upon us, and shut out the light? Are we going to forget the Risen One who is the Resurrection and the Life?

But there is no light without Him. Outside of Him is only the dull shadow of the Outer Darkness. God grant that the springtime of His Eternal Life may come into the soul of every one of us! God grant that the

radiance of that light which is Life and Love, given in fellowship with us even unto death, may show us the way by which we may arise into eternal life with Him who said, "I am the Resurrection and the Life"!

THE NATURALNESS OF THE RISEN LORD

And it came to pass, as He sat at meat with them, He took bread and blessed it and brake and gave to them.

And their eyes were opened and they knew Him. — Luke xxiv. 30, 31.

THE NATURALNESS OF THE RISEN LORD

As a piece of literature the story of the disciples of Emmaus and Jesus is marvellous. In the first place, the simplicity, the sincerity, the vividness of it is the perfection of narrative style.

And then the characters of the story! we seem to have known them always; we look into their faces, yea, into their very souls, and yet one of them is unnamed, and Cleopas is a name found nowhere else. They appear suddenly out of the crowd and disappear almost as mysteriously as Jesus. And Jesus Himself! He has passed death's portals, He is the Risen Christ; yet never was the Man of Nazareth more human. We behold Him, a wayside traveller, overtaking two other wayside travellers; we see Him, with that gift of hearty human comradeship which was His in such supreme measure joining Himself to these others, with

quick insight of sympathy making Himself their friend, drawing out their inmost thoughts, and then lifting them up with masterly teaching, — what would we not give for a verbatim report of that exposition beginning with Moses and all the prophets, of the things in the Old Testament Scriptures concerning Himself! — but all so naturally, so humanly, that although their hearts kindled by the fire of his wayside spoken words burned within them, they never once suspected who He was.

The test of a story is its ending. Many a story otherwise beautiful fails in this. But here the ending is the thrilling touch, the perfect climax. Nothing could be more dramatic, yet how far from any sensational trickery! The local color is flawless to the very end. We feel the breath of the spring day, and the sweetness of the twilight, and the warm comradeship which in these few hours has grown so strong that when Cleopas and his companion draw near their village home they cannot let their new-found Friend go. He must abide with them, because it is toward

evening and the day is far spent. They enter the humble house and then the Christ, the Risen Christ, is known — how? By some outflashing of the glory within Him? Nay, by the simple act of blessing and breaking the bread of the evening repast! It is the very homeliness of the act which discloses the Christ and holds our hearts still as this story comes to a close.

"He took bread, and blessed it, and gave to them: and their eyes were opened, and they knew Him!" We have here almost the very words of the institution of the Lord's Supper. Was it the remembrance of His breaking the bread on the night before He was crucified that revealed Jesus to these disciples of Emmaus? This is scarcely possible. There had been as yet but one Lord's Supper, and Cleopas certainly had not been there. His name, a Greek name, is not that of any of the Apostles, and there is no reason for believing that his unnamed companion any more than himself was one of the twelve. The unnamed one might possibly have been Luke,

the writer of this Gospel and the recorder of this story. No, not the Lord's Supper, but something else made Jesus known to them by His breaking of bread.

I believe we have here a glimpse of the daily life of Jesus in companionship with the disciples who gathered about Him. Comradeship and Masterhood always joined themselves in Jesus. Always He was the real, the honest, the familiar friend with every one of His friends, and always also, and as naturally He was first. No assertion of any claim was needed to seat Him at the head of the table; not one of the little company of His friends could ever have thought of anything else, or permitted Him to take any lower place. They loved Him with the love of a deep reverence. And so, often and often, in Peter's house at Capernaum, or beside the shore of Galilee, or on some lonely hillside where they sat down to their frugal repast they had heard Him ask the blessing, and before any others touched it they had seen Him break the bread in pledge of fellowship, and from His hand they had received it.

You can imagine how it was. You remember how your father used to ask the blessing at the family table; his very words, the peculiar turn of his speech and his manner are graven upon your memory. Every one, especially in these more intimate and sacred acts has his own peculiar way; and Jesus had His, a very sweet and noble way, expressing at once joyful thanksgiving to Our Father in Heaven and strong love of brotherhood with the friends who sat at meat with Him. I think His very manner of breaking the bread was all His own, with something so gracious in it that it never could be forgotten.

Every touch of this story is true to life. It was natural that the eyes of the two disciples should be holden when they first met Jesus on the road. They were preoccupied. The events of the past few days in Jerusalem had overwhelmed them and drowned their hopes in a flood of grief so that their senses were stunned and blunted. We see things and persons because we are looking for them. They were not looking for Jesus. Their very

devotion to Him had shot the pain of His Cross into their souls so that only the dying, the dead Christ had any place in their vision. The farthest from their thoughts was that this wayfarer, this fellow-traveller could be their Lord. Not even the tones of His voice seemed familiar.

And then there *was* something different about Jesus. For a year past the shadow of the coming Cross had rested upon Him. He was the Man of Sorrows. And though He was never, even in darkest moments the man of gloom, though His courage and constancy helped the self-deception of the disciples who never believed in the Cross until it came, the shadow of that sacrifice could not but have had a subtle effect upon Jesus, — upon His words, His manner, yea, the very tones of His voice.

Now the shadow is gone. He has come through death into victorious life. He is the same Jesus, the same human friend with the same spirit of true comradeship, yet with a difference which was easily, in the state of mind of those disciples, enough to hold their eyes

that they should not know Him. The very humanness of Jesus helped. He seemed, and was, just a fellow-traveller.

And what a graciousness was in His self-effacement! How kind to these friends, to keep the precious secret for the moment when, their souls having been enlightened and their hearts prepared and the day's journey done, they sat down together at home in the old way, and then — the familiar blessing, the well-remembered gracious gesture with which He broke the bread, the manner which so inevitably revealed Him! For no one else ever did it in just that beautiful way!

This was not like the world's idea of a God, — solemn, distant, splendid, — nor even like the conventionally religious idea of the Christ, — ceremonious and condescending, — but it was like the real Christ; it was the very way of Jesus.

The lesson of the Christ made known by the breaking of bread is a lesson for us to-day. Our Christ is the Christ of the disciples of Emmaus. The Christ whom we know, whom

we worship, with whom we come into personal fellowship, has passed beyond the stage of His life as the Man of Nazareth; He has become the risen, the living, the victorious Christ. Doubtless, as you have read the Acts and the Epistles, you have noticed how little is said about the life of Jesus before His crucifixion, and what a triumphant stress is laid upon His resurrection and His glory. Indeed, we hear Paul say, "Yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we Him [thus] no more."

And when we come to think of it, was not this just what might have been expected? Contrast the feeling of the two disciples of Emmaus before Jesus revealed Himself with their feeling about Him and toward Him after he He had made Himself known by the breaking of bread. Before that moment they had built their hopes — and earthly though these may have been they were lofty expectations — upon Him who should redeem Israel. They looked for a half-religious, half-political Saviour, a Christ after the flesh. His crucifixion was for them noth-

ing less than black disaster and the tomb in Joseph's garden seemed the grave of their hope. But now all was changed in a moment. As they walked with Him over the hills in the sunset glow, Jesus had shown them how it behooved Christ to suffer and to enter into His glory. And then, He whom they had thought done to death by the Cross and the Roman spear made himself known to them by the familiar blessing and the never-to-be-forgotten manner, all His own, of breaking the bread, so that, even though coarse and common food, it seemed a gift of love from His hand. And instantly they knew Him, — yes, as they had never known Him before. His talk by the way which had made their hearts burn within them, His opening of the truth in Scripture about Himself, had, like a flash of light become a living truth; now they knew Him, the Risen, the Deathless One, the Redeemer by sacrifice, the glorified, the almighty. Can you not see that forever afterward the Christ of their enlarged vision must be the Christ who filled their thoughts and was pro-

claimed in their words! And yet He was nearer to their hearts than they had ever been able to let Him come in the old days.

When they constrained the unknown yet strangely fascinating companion of their journey and said, "Abide with us, for it is toward evening and the day is far spent," and He went in and sat down with them to their poor supper and made Himself known by the breaking of bread, what a deep, what a heavenly, meaning was in it all! He was the same Jesus, the same gracious comrade who in past days perhaps they had thought almost too free and familiar for the Christ who was soon to be King in Jerusalem. But now they knew, they knew how His freedom, His fellowship, was real with a deeper, holier reality than they had ever dreamed. The very nearness, the very comradeship of the Master took upon itself awe which searched their souls. The very love of God Himself seemed to overshadow them. And this is our Christ, our Friend, our Comrade, yet our Risen, Living Lord!

In this latter day, in this age of the ripeness of things, — a ripeness which may be the sign of coming judgment, — in this age of a madness for material success which threatens the very foundations of morality, when conduct has become more than ever the test of faith, yea, perhaps its martyrdom, we look longingly toward that Life, lived in a world too much like our own in its darker aspects. We seek, as the world has never sought before, the measure of true living and its inspiration in the life and example of Jesus as He passed through His conflict with the sins of the world. We long for just that homely fellowship with Him which the disciples had while He was still the Man of Nazareth. We want the human touch of Jesus.

And we have it. But it is the touch of Him who made Himself known as the Risen Christ, the Living Christ, by the breaking of bread. Not less human nor less real, but more near is He because to us He is something and Some One infinitely greater than the dim record of the example of a life lived nine-

teen hundred years ago. That life of the long ago comes into living touch with our lives to-day, since the Risen Christ has made himself known by the breaking of bread. Our Comrade, our Friend? yes! But our Living Lord!

And therefore we do not despair even of a world burdened with its sins; we do not sadly say, like the disciples of Emmaus before Christ was made known to them, "We trusted that this had been He who should have redeemed Israel." For our Living Lord is He to whom all power in heaven and earth is given, and we know Him as the Redeemer not of Israel only but of mankind.

THE COMPLETED BROTHERHOOD

And He said unto them: Cast the net on the right side of the ship and ye shall find. They cast therefore, and now they were not able to draw it for the multitude of fishes.

John xxi. 6.

THE COMPLETED BROTHERHOOD

At the beginning of the Gospel of John, in the latter part of its first chapter, there is an idyl of friendship telling how Jesus and the Galilean fishermen first met and were drawn to each other. In the last chapter, at the end of the Gospel, the note of the beginning is heard once more. We see what the friendship has become after trial, — how firm, how sweet, how familiar, yet with that touch of awe without which no great love is complete. But the poem is also a parable. The story of the disciples' night fishing with its wonderful morning sequel has a lesson whose freshness remains unfaded.

To understand the parable we must recall the history of the few weeks preceding the event which it records.

The disciples followed Jesus in his last entry into Jerusalem inflamed with hope of the immediate coming of His kingdom. Their

old employments had been forsaken; they seemed to have bid farewell forever to Galilee with its boats and nets; visions of honors and responsibilities in a world-wide empire filled their minds.

The crucifixion of Jesus was not only a bitter personal grief; it was a black disappointment, shattering at a stroke the dream of their lives; and the resurrection of Jesus while it turned their mourning into joy, failed to restore the dream intact. The looked-for kingdom did not come. The days passed by, brightened by occasional visions of their Risen Lord, yet without any call to action, without any call even to the sort of service which the Lord had asked of them before the events of the Cross.

They returned to their old homes in Galilee; and at last one day Peter announced, "I go a-fishing!" which appears to mean, "Since there is nothing else to do, I am going to work at my old trade once more." The others fell in with his suggestion. They said, "We also go with thee."

Their resolve shows the healthy moral condition of these men. High spiritual work and experience such as had been theirs for three years past is not without its perils, one of which is that it often unfits the workers for the plain duties of life. But these disciples had been with Jesus and they were unspoiled.

Probably the fishing-business of Zebedee and Sons, in which perhaps Peter was a partner, had not been discontinued during the absence of the disciples. Zebedee had managed it with the help of his hired servants; and it is altogether likely that James, John, Peter, and the others had been supported from its proceeds while they were busy with their Master's work. It was but right now, when their Lord was not demanding their personal attendance, that they should take hold again and do their part.

Moreover, an old fisherman, like Peter, could scarcely see the boats go out and return again with their shining catch and not feel the fishing instinct rising in his breast. And if any one imagines that such a feeling would

betray a worldly or unspiritual disposition, or that turning to such work would be inconsistent with the dignity of an apostolic calling, then he little understands true apostleship, or the sacredness with which Jesus has invested all the work of common life.

What happened on their first fishing-trip, or during the first part of it, is an old story. "That night they caught nothing." Often before they had met the same experience. Every fisherman knows it. Nothing is more uncertain than the ways of the fish in the waters. And that is one reason why some people dislike fishing, and amuse themselves with humorous scorn of fishermen and their luck. But in this apostolic occupation there is not only an education in patience, but a training in trust of Divine Providence. The true fisherman is always getting a blessing, even when he does not fill his net; he can afford to let other people laugh.

This is part of the parable. "That night they caught nothing." Yet they were in the way of their duty; they were waiting upon a

higher than human power. Nor was their apparently fruitless labor wasted. Their labor kept them in readiness in the right position for rich reward when the right moment should come.

The night wore slowly away in resultless toil. Again and again, now here, now there, they cast the net and caught nothing. The flush of dawn began to redden the eastern sky beyond the dusky hills; and still they labored on, still they cast the net; for your true fisherman is not a man that gives up easily. Nor is it simply a dull patience, or foolish trust in mere luck that lures him on, — not if he be, like Peter and his comrades, experienced in fishing; but he knows that this is the way to success. To work on against all apparent hope is part of his calling, because his work must always be concerned with a mystery: and no matter what his skill or craft, for the largest part of such success as may come to him he must trust in a Power which is beyond his ken.

Upon those disciples, upon those all-night

fishers, the day dawned at last and morning came. On the shore, perhaps a hundred yards away, they see a man standing, — some fellow-fisherman, very likely, come to look out over the water and watch for signs of a school of fish, as fishermen do to this day from the bluffs of the New England coast. He must be a fisherman, so they think, for in true fisher phrase he calls to them, "Children, have ye any meat?" And the Greek suggests, as a more idiomatic English equivalent, "Boys, have you caught anything?" They shout back the discouraged answer, "No!" Again the man on the shore calls, "Cast the net on the right side of the boat and ye shall find!" They obeyed. Do you ask why? Then remember they had toiled all night in vain, and any suggestion might be welcome; but beyond this, I believe they thought, "This fisherman from his vantage ground sees what we cannot see; he sees a school of fish."

They cast the net therefore, according to his advice. And now, behold, they were not able to draw it for the multitude of fishes.

Their all-night quest was rewarded in the morning. Richly blessed was their work.

"In this wise Jesus showed Himself to His disciples."

The marvellous in this story dwells not on what is called "the miraculous." The great draught of fishes is something the like of which has happened to many a fisherman; and the part of the Lord in it is only natural to Him who knows the mysteries of the waters and of life, and can command the movements of men upon the land or of the fish in the sea.

The real marvel is a marvel of Divine love, and it lies in the manner in which Jesus showed Himself to His disciples. Remember He is the Risen Christ! Not in shining glory attended by mighty angels, attired in no priestly or regal robes, speaking in no solemn other-world accents, but as a comrade He shows himself. Alone on the lake shore in the morning's dawn, in fisherman's garb, in fisherman's fashion, He salutes the all-night toilers in the boats with their own familiar

phrase, with the call of their craft. As a brother fisherman He shows Himself, so that they take His advice without question and discover who He really is only by the great gift He gives them. And this is the Risen Christ! The victor over death and sin, the Lord of Life whom we worship!

The parable is complete. But do we understand it? Indeed it would almost seem that the marvel is not even the manner in which Jesus showed Himself. The greatest marvel is the unbelief that makes such a revelation of the Christ appear unnatural or inappropriate.

But why should it be hard for Christians to understand that to be genuine is natural to Jesus, and that His fellowship with His friends was always, and always shall be, complete? Our Brother scorns condescension. He is too great to need the fuss and ceremony which our littleness imagines necessary to greatness. The Lord of Life comes close to our common lives with the divine ease of a perfect love.

But the parable widens; it becomes a prophecy. This is the second time that Jesus taught his disciples a lesson about their greater work out of their common work in the fishing-boats. And this time the lesson is taught by the Christ, crucified and risen, ready to send His Apostles forth armed with the power of a completed gospel for the conquest of the world.

The prophecy in the parable is for all time; it is for us even more than for the first disciples. Over and over again Christ's church in her quest for men's souls has repeated the experience of the Galilean disciples in their all-night fishing. The Lord's presence seems withdrawn. Our labor seems in vain, without progress, without success, just a ceaseless casting of the net which ever comes back empty. Fishing for men is like fishing for fish. There is many a fruitless night of toil when nothing is caught and work seems thrown away. In other things also there is likeness. There is ever the same dealing with a mystery beyond our ken. The ways of the fish in the waters

have been studied for ages by men whose wits have been sharpened by need of daily food, and latterly they have been investigated with all the appliances of science by government commissions. Yet the mystery remains. Who knows, for example, why the fish that wander in great schools are abundant one year and the next year can scarcely be found? Of course, for this and other mysteries of life beneath the waters there are theories in plenty; but few of them can be proved.

God alone knows the way of the fish in the sea, and God only knows the way of human souls. Does any one but God really know why one generation will be responsive to His Spirit's call and with open mind receive His gospel of eternal life, and the next generation will prove refractory, indifferent, shy of the net? Or why should one country or one city or one congregation receive Christ's message of salvation gladly, and another, very little different in circumstances or mental character, remain untouched?

We think we can see reasons. Sometimes

the reasons appear quite clear — up to a certain point, within limited bounds. We say "The spirit of the age is against faith," or "The ministry has lost spiritual power," or "Religious methods are faulty and fail to adapt themselves to the need of the hour," or "Theology needs reconstruction." And some or all of these things may be perfectly true. Yet why they should be true at one time and not at another remains a mystery, and the discussions concerning them and the remedies proposed remind one of the talk you may hear when a group of fishermen gather about the fire in the evening after an unsuccessful day's work.

The great spiritual movements which at intervals agitate men are, after all, a profound mystery. They follow a law higher than any we are acquainted with, and obey the will of Him whose way is in the sea and His paths in the great waters and whose footsteps are unknown.

Meantime what shall we do? Shall we draw the boats ashore and wait idly for the Lord's

appearance? Nay! we know neither His day nor His hour, but we do know that no reward comes to the unready. Through all the night the boats must be manned and the nets out. Nor shall our toil be really in vain even when it seems most fruitless. It brings always the blessing of discipline, and keeps our souls alert, and teaches that truest of faith which is faithfulness, and makes us ready for the morning. Nor shall every night be like that one when the disciples caught nothing. If there are no net-trying hauls, there shall be at least enough success to make us know that the Master is not far away.

But we shall see some strange things in our all-night quests,—man-made revivals, with glittering equipment of boats and gear and captains whose great "I" sounds so loud that men can scarcely hear the plain Lord Himself; we shall see much threshing of the waters and appearance of success, yet pitiful results when flimsy, broken nets are actually drawn ashore.

We shall see what is even worse,—boats whose crews deny the work for which they

sailed forth, and ceasing to be fishers for souls turn their craft into carriers of excursion parties or form them into meaningless parades of empty ceremony, while they quarrel with each other for precedency.

But for honest fishers the prophecy in the parable is bright with the strength of a great hope. We may work in the dark now, or at best by the dim, reflected light of the stars. We may, we do, make mistakes. The careless crews and the crowd ashore mock us; perhaps doubts disturb us. But we know that though His face and form may be hidden for the moment, He, the Mighty Fisherman, our Brother, the Lord of Life, never forgets us and is never really far away. And we know that the sure-coming dawn shall reveal Him bringing a result that shall fill our souls with awe and thanksgiving.

When we reflect upon the place of this story, of the all-night fishing with its morning blessing; when we remember that this is almost the very last scene in which Jesus appears in visible presence on earth; when we see how

past and future, the assurance of the perpetual comradeship of Jesus, and the promise of awful power, are here linked together, then the prophecy in the story becomes portentous. Many a time the prophecy has been fulfilled in part. Blessings have come from the realized presence and manifest power of the Spirit of the Christ. Yet the promise seems to point toward some richer blessing than any the Church on earth has yet known, — some morning after darkest night, bright with the very Presence of Him whom the disciples saw beside Galilee, speaking with such power that our hearts shall leap with joy and, awestruck, we shall say, "It is the Lord! He has come!"

PRAYER IS MORE THAN ASKING

I will stand upon my watch, and set me upon the tower, and will watch to see what He will say unto me, and what I shall answer when I am reproved. — HABAKKUK ii. 1.

PRAYER IS MORE THAN ASKING

WHAT is prayer? The readiest answer would be, "Prayer is asking something from God."

But this defines prayer only in its narrowest sense. We must remember that prayer has a human use which has colored our idea of its meaning. We ask things of our fellow-men; we pray to them as truly and quite as often as we pray to God. Even now people sometimes say "I pray you." Several centuries ago they commonly said "I pray thee," when we would say "Please," and always expressing a request, always asking something. The old use of the word is enshrined in legal documents. A petition to a Court of Law ends, "Your petitioners do ever pray."

Asking, is indeed prayer: and because this is the first, the most common sort of prayer we forget that prayer to God may become something else and something more than asking. At the outset we becloud the issue; we

think of prayer only as asking and thus we raise the questions, "Is it of any use to pray? Does God hear? Does He answer? Will He give what we ask?"

The old theology called Calvinism — though it is much older than Calvin, and in its most rigid form more extreme than anything he taught — viewed God as an absolute Sovereign, self-limited in His sovereignty by His own predestination from all eternity of everything that comes to pass. The predestinarians were devout men; they believed in prayer, they practised prayer. And yet, to the questions "Will God hear our prayers? Will He answer?" their reply was, "Yes, if we ask according to His will." And while that doctrine has been a comfort to many Christians and a conservator of faith to those able to discern the deep truth in it, to many others it has been a stumbling-block. It has clipped the wings of their prayer; it has left them in doubt about the real efficacy of prayer.

Into the midst of these doubts, reinforcing them, the new scientific philosophy has come.

It has not been often noticed — indeed it almost seems as though the notice of it were carefully avoided; but is it not true that the modern scientific philosophy is practically, not only a new but an extreme Calvinism?

In place of a Sovereign God this philosophy puts an absolutely Sovereign Law of Nature. In place of predestination it teaches a remorseless evolution going on from eternity to eternity, ordering all things according to an inevitable process, under the pressure of an iron necessity smothering the cry of feeble man to the Powers above.

Now, few of us are either theologians or philosophers. We have at most some superficial, second-hand acquaintance with the history of religious thought or the doctrines of the day. Yet percolating down through the mental strata of the times these doctrines affect us all; and in nothing do they affect us more quickly than in our attitude toward prayer. The question about prayer comes in a new form. No longer is it simply "Will God hear? Will He answer?" But the question now is, "*Can* God

hear? *Can* He answer?" Can the Being who fills the immensity of the universe hear us when we pray? Can He whose impartial, eternal Law rules everywhere change one jot or tittle of that fixed and unalterable order, or allow its majestic march to swerve in the least because of our puny asking? If we follow the path of a narrow logic, it is easy to make prayer seem useless, hopeless.

But the new knowledge of our time suggests something beside God's vastness and the rigidity of His law. More and more the absurdity of attempting to measure the universe in the pint cup of our little human logic is becoming evident; less and less is it possible to think of God as an impassive Sovereign throned in distant skies, or as an impersonal Force acting mechanically upon all things. Our new knowledge discloses something which can only be called the intimacy of God with every atom of His creation. We discover — and our growing knowledge makes the discovery growingly impressive — that the Power which holds the universe embraces its minutest particle. The

dust which we brush from our clothes is not different from star dust. We dare no longer call anything "little." Not even the microscope can find a particle that has escaped the touch of God.

Most significant of all, we find that the mystery of Life is larger than we dreamed. We scarcely dare speak of the ground under our feet as "dead." And yet the secret of the principle of Life more and more retires into some evident kinship with those mighty Angels of the Lord, like Light, which pervade infinity.

The significance of Life deepens; the meaning of that expression of Life which we call "Mind" or "Spirit" widens. The goings of the Eternal Spirit, in which we live and move and have our being, are heard as He walks in His garden of our earth in the cool of the day. The intimacy of God with His world and with our souls takes a new solemnity.

The Fatherhood of God is not a doctrine of modern science; but the conception of God which science is — it may be unconsciously —

shaping can be reasonably described only in terms of Fatherhood.

Now, to us Christians the thought of God as the Almighty Father is nothing new. It is a teaching which pervades all the Bible from beginning to end; it is the very centre and soul of the Gospel of Christ. But the new knowledge of the intimacy of God with His world and with life ought to help us to understand how absolutely, how precisely Jesus meant what He said when He taught that God is Our Father.

We have not always understood Jesus. With minds confused, sometimes by a teaching of theology which made God seem a Sovereign so far above and so foreign to ourselves that no real Fatherhood was possible; sometimes by gloomy, scientific dogmas representing God as some vast, unknown, impersonal Force, Jesus' Gospel of the Fatherhood of God has appeared only figurative, sentimental, or at best applicable only to select souls.

But Jesus verily meant all He said, and all that great word implies when He told us to

call God "your *Father* which is in heaven." Yes! in Heaven, in all His Universe!

And this thought of God changes the whole idea of prayer. Prayer ceases to be begging for something from some Power outside of and foreign to ourselves. Prayer becomes something more than petition to the Governor of the world, and something different from mere asking.

Jesus tells us, "When ye pray, use not vain repetitions as the heathen do," — do not pray like beggars teasing a superior — "for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking. Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father *knoweth what things ye have need of before ye ask Him.*"

It is true, a dumb Force cannot change in answer to prayer. A Sovereign who is simply the head of the government must keep coldly and impartially within the limits of the letter of the law. But a Sovereign Father whose name and nature is Sovereign Love, whose intimacy with His children is that they are part of Himself, easily finds ways within His law

to answer His children's cry. And since He is Father, the very fact that He knows beforehand what we need instead of making prayer needless makes prayer natural.

A new aspect of prayer is brought to light in this great word of Jesus. God's side of prayer is revealed. A Father loves to have His children talk with Him and freely tell Him their wants. Prayer is asking for the things we need from Our Father. But prayer to a Father must always be more than asking; it must be the expression of the fellowship of love. Prayer to a Father is a communion in which two persons share.

God always answers our prayers. He answers them in the spirit and after the manner of a Father who knows our needs before we speak. The expression of our heart's desire always moves Him, because it is the desire of His own children; and though He may not always give the very thing for which we ask; because the wisdom of Divine Love knows what we really need, yet He never gives us a stone for bread.

If prayer were mere asking, and if we could have every whim satisfied by teasing, then the power of prayer would be a fatal power. The real power of prayer is given to those who have learned that prayer is more than asking. The real power of prayer belongs to those who know prayer as fellowship with Our Father.

But before we can enjoy the privileges or experience the powers of children, we must take our place within the family life. The relation between Father and children is mutual; the blessing of it, the efficiency of it rests in fellowship. You have no right to stand outside the family, unbelieving and loveless toward your Father, and then demand what you may deem your rights.

There is a treatment of the doctrine of God's Fatherhood which ought to make those guilty of it ashamed and afraid. To ignore the mutuality of our relationship with Him; to demand the advantages while we refuse the obligations; to care only for what we think we ought to get from Our Father while we deny Him our

love, our submission, and our service, — this is nothing less than treason. This is the great sin from which all lesser sins proceed. There is a dreadful, as truly as there is a blessed aspect of the Fatherhood of God. Because He is a God of love He is a jealous God.

But inside the family, in our place as loving and loyal children, not only have we the right to pray, but prayer is the natural, the spontaneous expression of our fellowship with Our Father. Since God is Our Father, it is not too much to say that our prayers may influence Him, — yes, and thus move the hand that moves the world.

The Weisshorn is one of the highest and, many travellers say, the most beautiful of the snow-clad peaks of the Alps. Professor Tyndall in his vivid description of his ascent of that mountain, tells how from hour to hour of toilsome and perilous climb the summit, though often in view seemed no nearer and he almost despaired of the possibility of reaching it, until, rounding the sharp shoulder of a ridge, there it stood, in all the unspeakable

glory of its spotless whiteness, only a few yards away!

I think a full experience of the meaning of prayer will be something like that. We climb toward its holy and beautiful crown, toiling, often doubting, yet always climbing, until we reach the point where we can speak no more, when our asking seems at an end. We come to some place in our experience like that of the prophet Habakkuk. The sins of his people troubled him; he cried to God against them. And the answer came in a vision of judgment so fearful that the prophet's soul stood aghast. In passionate words of prayer he protests, until, alarmed at his own freedom and presumption, he breaks off abruptly and keeps silence. He can say no more to God, — he can only say to himself, "I will stand upon my watch, and set me upon the tower, and will look forth to see *what He will say unto me!*" Out of the very agony of his prayer he has grasped the highest truth about prayer, — the truth that prayer is a real communion, and that prayer is not alone our speaking to God,

but that it is also God speaking to us. Only when we have come to the place where we stop asking and say, "I will look forth to see what He will say unto me," "I will hear what God the Lord will speak," only then do we approach the summit of prayer. But then, the beautiful summit is close at hand; then we shall know that prayer is mutual, prayer is communion.

We believe that God is Our Father: in our hearts, in our better and clearer moments we believe God knows us for His own children. The moment we do thus believe and accept the truth of our relationship with God, communion between Him and our soul becomes a fact even though we may not be clearly conscious of it. The consciousness of it waits upon our patience and our willingness to be still and listen. We shall know the blessing of prayer when we learn the practice of silence before God, waiting for Him to speak to our souls.

Too often our prayers are mere words, habitual phrases uttered while the mind wan-

ders elsewhere; the spirit may be willing while the flesh is weak. And even when most sincere and most earnest our prayers may be, not too long, but too full of our own words, too absorbed in eager and continued asking.

Did you ever study the prayers of Jesus? There is but one, the prayer for His disciples at the Last Supper, which has any length; and that is really short when we consider how much it says. His other prayers are scarcely more than sentences; and all of them, even the great prayer in the seventeenth chapter of John, are like fragments of a conversation. The prayers of Jesus always make us feel that what He says is for the sake of what His Father is going to say to Him. The effect upon us of the prayers of Jesus might be likened to that which we feel when a friend in the same room with us talks through the telephone, and we know that some one else, unseen and unheard by us, is listening and answering.

The recorded prayers of Jesus are brief, they are fragments of one side of a conversation; but we know that His prayer hours were not

hurried or abridged. With days as busy as those of the busiest of us, He passed whole nights in prayer. And while we dare not even wish the report of those all-night vigils might have been given us, because we feel that they were too sacred and personal for our hearing, the manner of His prayer which we do behold makes us certain that the all-night prayers of Jesus were communion more than asking, — listening while His Father spoke, more than utterance of His own words.

But will God answer? Will He speak so that we can hear and understand? Will any word or voice come to us out of the dark and the silence? Now, there are ways of speaking without words. A friend speaks to us with a look. Nature speaks to some of us without audible voice when we hold our own thought quiet so that our souls can listen. We say "Conscience speaks within us." And God can make your spirit understand if you will but keep silence and wait for Him. Perhaps you may say, "This is only mysticism, and only possible to certain mystical temperaments."

But, no! This is communion with Our Father in its most practical working. How can we know the reality of communion if we fill all the moments — too often brief and hurried moments — of our prayers with our asking and then never wait for the answer? How can we know what He, Our Father, will say to us while we persist in doing all the talking ourselves? I believe many of us would find, if we should recall our experiences, that those of our prayers which were most clearly and certainly answered were ejaculations, like the prayers of Jesus, uttered in the midst of our daily work, perhaps not even spoken aloud; and then, while in silent and waiting faith our souls kept still, the answer came in some bright path seen through our maze of apparently hopeless perplexity, or in some clear vision of duty, or some deep peace in the midst of trouble, or strength and joy of soul where all had been weakness and doubt.

The practice of silence before God is the practice of the Presence of God. At its least and lowest the respect, the reverence we owe

Our Father should make us wait and hear what He will speak. Silence before God is but the common sense of an actual faith; and a wholesome discipline, if we are inclined to be wordy or tempted to be eloquent, or if we find ourselves framing our prayers in conventional and hackneyed phrase. Silence before God is escape from ourselves into Our Father's presence.

Yes! Prayer is more than asking; prayer is the fellowship of the spirit of the Father with the souls of His children.

We shall know the power and the blessing of prayer when we know the reality of the bond which joins us to Our Father in Heaven, and when in humble faith we confess ourselves His real and honest children.

THE HARDSHIP OF FAITH

We walk by faith, not by sight.

2 Corinthians v. 7.

THE HARDSHIP OF FAITH

We are quite ready to confess that faith is not easy. It seems a matter of course that faith must be tested, proved, disciplined. The "trial of faith" in this sense can be accepted without trespassing upon the religious properties. But does not something different sometimes arise in our soul, — something we are not quite ready to speak out loud, but which if put into words would say, "Faith is *itself* a trial. Faith is a hardship"?

Have you never asked yourself, "Why should I be compelled to believe in what I cannot see? Is faith real? Is it reasonable? Is there any use in it?"

The last question alone is pertinent, because, whether faith is reasonable or not, it certainly is real. A larger part of life than we often think rests upon faith. Even as a trial faith is always with us, and faith as a trial is by no means confined to the religious life. Some

of you who are mothers will go to the city to-morrow. You will leave your house and your children to the care of servants or friends. You will trust these precious possessions to those who are out of your sight and your reach. All day long you will walk by faith and not by sight. Is this never a hardship?

You are a man of business. You go to your office and every moment of your busy day, even when it seems to yourself and to others that your hand alone is on the lever guiding the machine you are really, in ways large and small, trusting other people who are out of your sight and beyond your control; and when you return home in the evening you know that enterprises started during the day, which closely concern your personal interests have passed into the management of men whom you do not see and can only trust.

In general this does not trouble us. Indeed, it has become an axiom that, not only must business be carried on by faith, but that faith is a most advantageous foundation for affairs and one which greatly enlarges the power of

action. The walk by faith and not by sight works well, as a rule, until some trouble, some panic of distrust takes possession of men. And then, does not faith itself become a trial hard to bear?

Few of us concern ourselves with the problems of the universe; yet few of us escape moments when, the feeling of our seeming insignificance and our real helplessness in the grasp of the mighty forces of nature comes over us with dark oppression. This life so precious to us, the life which is our own sensitive self, hangs poised upon the unknown will — or caprice, as it sometimes seems — of mysterious and awful powers. A slight mistake in the adjustment of ourselves to our circumstances is enough to quench our life like a snuffed candle. We walk, because we must, by faith in the midst of constantly present and unseen dangers. And if faith is seldom a conscious trial, then this is only because use and wont have dulled our sense of what we call "the uncertainties of life."

But the sense of these uncertainties does

awake at times. Some malignant flash out of the portentous shadows that flicker about our path, some "accident," some harsh grazing of terrifying peril, makes us cry out against the lack of light; our soul revolts against the dim lamp of faith which alone is given to guide us.

The trials of faith which meet us along our common earthly way ought to make it evident that the difficulties of Christian faith and the burdens of it are not artificial or unnecessary, though it may be doubted whether the facts about faith in common life make Christian faith any easier or any the less a trial.

The trial of our faith as Christians is rooted deep in the nature of the faith itself and also in our own nature. Here we are in this world, — this material, apparently substantial world, — and we are living in a fleshly body which corresponds with the material world and has grown out of it. We are part and parcel of the visible, tangible, to-be-felt things in the midst of which we are placed. Our knowledge comes to us largely through our physical

senses. We know what we can see and touch and handle and measure and weigh, in terms of length, breadth, thickness, and heaviness. All else seems uncertain and problematical.

We are, indeed, constantly learning that there are vast realms of truth beyond the grasp of our bare senses. Even the Multiplication Table, which every child learns at school, has in it actually spiritual implications. But we shut our eyes against the hint of the spiritual. We value the Multiplication Table for the sake of what we call its "practical" — which means its earthly and sensible — use. The most of us always, and all of us for the most of the time, do positively shrink from whatever leads above or beyond the well-defined bounds of life in the flesh on a visible, solid earth. There alone we breathe easily and are comfortably at home. The very stars are acceptable because they are visible and solid amidst the mystery which we call "empty space." We live in the body; we are of the earth, earthy; even the thoughts of that spiritual thing which we call "mind" are colored,

warped, formed, fashioned, by the influences of our fleshly and earthly existence. And now to us, bodily earthites, comes the message of the spiritual, invisible, eternal, ever present, and Almighty God!

The idea of God is a necessary idea, which forces itself upon us; and yet the idea of God contradicts all our experience, all the custom and teaching of our senses. We must believe in God. Only the fool says in his heart, There is no God. And yet is the belief easy?

We may have been trained, or we may have trained ourselves into a sort of mechanical acceptance of a credal formula; but when we really try to think or feel our creed when we try it alone, in the recesses of our own soul, are we never troubled? We need be neither philosophers nor theologians to discover that faith is a trial. Even children often find faith a heavier trial than their elders are aware. Some of us can never forget the spiritual tortures through which we passed in childhood or early youth.

The human mind, unable to escape God,

yet recoiling with confused, terrified amazement from the thought of One so foreign to fleshly experience, seeks ways of escape. One way is that of the idolatry which has fastened itself upon the religion of so large a portion of mankind. This is the primitive way, characteristic of the childhood of the race. Another, which we might call the decadent way of supercultivation, is the denial of God's Personality, the degradation of the idea of God into the idea of an Unknown Force. After its fashion this is as fleshly as idolatry, because it attempts the elimination of every living touch of God upon our own living souls, and compels us to think only of some blind Power working upon the materials of which our bodies are made. Both idolatry and agnosticism are, after all, just pathetic protests against the hardships of faith.

The Christian revelation, — the proclamation of God manifest in the flesh in the person of Jesus, God's Christ, — is certainly an aid to faith. The craving which idolatry represents; the longing for a God who can be seen and touched, is answered in Christ. Yet Christ

does not lift the burden of faith. He makes the burden a more personal and pressing one. The Person of Christ Himself makes a strange demand upon our faith. And the hardship of the demand is little, if not all relieved when we deny Christ's Virgin birth and His resurrection and His miracles, — in short, when we deny Christ altogether and try to content ourselves with a human Jesus. He becomes only more inexplicable thus. The fact remains that, through Him, a flood of light from the Unseen and the Spiritual has descended upon this world, — a flood of light which neither the semi-paganism of the Church in its dark ages nor the cult of a semi-materialistic agnosticism in our later and more sophisticated time has been able to quench.

Account for it as you may, it must be confessed that Jesus has opened a new world to faith. He has enlarged both our conception of a world to come and our conception of life in this present world. Faith must hereafter lay hold of relations which have been established between the spiritual and the earthly.

The face of Jesus is a mirror in which we see our true life. We discover ourselves and, behold, we are children of the Unseen, the Spiritual God!

The discovery reverses the familiar order mirrored from our earthly experience, and shows that the things which are seen are temporary and the things which are unseen are eternal. Christian Faith calls to us with imperative demand, and says, "Lay hold upon the eternal realities; clasp hands with your unseen Heavenly Father!" And we are yet in the body, living on this visible, material earth! Is faith no trial? Is there no hardship in faith?

But is not the trial, the hardship, the strife, the struggle, which Faith calls us into precisely that which we most need? A little reflection upon the nature and meaning of the gospel of Jesus is enough to prove the need.

We say that Jesus reveals God to us. And this is true. This is why Jesus is the Christ, and this proves Him the Christ. In a true,

visible, living body of flesh and blood, in a true human life like our own, Jesus shows us the *Father*. That great word, which contains the soul of the gospel of Jesus, needs no proving. The spirit within us leaps to meet its message. Heart and soul cry out for the Living God, and when we hear Jesus say "Your Father!" we find the explanation of ourselves. And we love the Christ who in a life like our own, subject to our limitations, tempted in all points like as we are, exhales from His very humanity the righteousness and love of God. We see God in our Brother Jesus, and in our Brother we behold our Father.

But this is not all. In Jesus we see God through a life which, human as it is, most evidently springs from something infinitely larger than this life of the body in a world of dust. We feel his kinship with the spiritual mysteries and majesties of the eternal world even while He walks upon the earth. He declares that He has come to give Eternal Life; and His own life has in it that which

compels our recognition of something in Him which cannot be measured by any earthly rules.

A grave doubt may be permitted whether the credal definitions and affirmations of the divinity of Christ have not served to hide rather than clarify this mysterious, this awful kinship of Jesus with the Spiritual and Eternal. It is something felt too deeply for adequate expression in words. Through all the centuries down to to-day men of all sorts, even unbelieving men, have felt and do feel it. And this kinship of Jesus with the spiritual and eternal, with the Larger Life above this earth, has had more power over men than His moral teaching. In fact, His moral teaching compels reverence because of the awful authority behind it. In the doctrine of Jesus' righteousness and love appear as mighty angels of eternity. You may, if you think it will help you, leave the miracles of His mighty works out of the account when you try to understand Jesus; but this greater miracle inherent in His nature and character remains inexpugnable.

The message of the very life of Jesus, of His human life as our Brother, calls us toward a life larger than any native to this world. It is the message of the Life of God, His Father and ours. And clearly, as He teaches that this Eternal Life when received from Him is ours now, here, while we are still in the body, with equal clearness does His message imply that Eternal Life must go on, eternally growing in a wider, freer, more real and true existence than any possible in this world.

As Jesus is about to leave this world, His parting prayer for His brethren who are God's children is, "Father, I will that they also whom Thou hast given me be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory which Thou hast given me!"

Such, then, is the nature of our Christian life, our life as brethren of Jesus and children of Our Father. Yet here we are, still in the flesh, with bodies half animal, and moulded out of the stuff that must return to the dust of this material world upon which we live;

here we are, part of the busy, swarming life, — the life of the world which takes the temporary things seriously as though they were the only reality. We live in a world of sight and sound and touch and sense and body and birth and death, where everything tends to make mere earthites of us. And we are not earthites: we are in the world, but not of it; we are children of the Infinite, Eternal, Spiritual God! And our real life, the life that is going to endure and grow into true freedom and greatness, is not earthly but heavenly.

We must conquer the Canaan of this our inheritance as children of God. Faith is the strong right hand by which we may grasp our own. Let us thank God for the hardships which make faith hardy; and for the difficulties which compel faith to be daring!

Moreover we need initiation into the ways and instincts of the Family to which we belong. The lessons of this learning cannot wait. Here on earth we must master the knowledge of those rudiments of eternal life without which we

would be unfit for its larger phase. Here only, amid the contrasts and conflicts between flesh and spirit, can these lessons be rightly learned. Faith is our schoolmaster. The teaching of Faith is not easy: it was not meant to be easy. Faith is a stern discipline, training us in the mastery of reality.

It is never easy to believe in the Unseen and the Spiritual; yet even without Christ's gospel we might know, and we do know, that the real things in human life are spiritual and unseen. These minds within us that can reach up to the stars; this conscience that whispers to us the truth of such an immaterial thing as Righteousness; these souls capable of a Love immeasurably beyond any fleshly love; this *spirit* within us, — is not this the real thing which makes us men and not brutes?

The gospel of Christ comes with its strong message answering the vague cravings, the undeveloped spiritual instincts, of the real human in us. It tells us, "You are children of God; your life is His life, eternal life!" Faith guides our hands to reach the gracious

gift. Faith strengthens our arms to grasp the inestimable blessing.

In the nature of the case the discipline of Faith cannot be always easy or gentle. Like the children that we are, we whimper; we complain; we cry out, "O Lord, I don't like Faith! Faith is too hard. I want to see. I want to walk by sight!" No! We cannot walk by sight, we must walk by Faith, because "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our Faith!"

It is more than doubtful whether we should find it easier to lay hold of God if we could see Him. The experience of Jesus with his disciples shows that visible presence does not make the way of faith easier. The one complaint of Jesus against His disciples while He was with them was, their "little faith." When He left them and ascended to His Father in the unseen heaven, their faith grew larger and stronger. Faith is at home only while teaching spirit to lay hold of Spirit; and Faith exults when the spirit in us grasps Our Father, who is Spirit.

Love will indeed outlast Faith, but Love will not reign supreme until Faith has made our Father's Presence real and His love unquestioned. Then only will Faith's task be finished.

And Faith must have us now, while we are children, when the lasting impress can yet be made upon our souls. Now, through the hardship of faith, we must begin to learn the difference between the illusions of the flesh in a world of perishing material, and the life of Our Father's house, where such immaterial and spiritual things as righteousness, love, truth, beauty, are the real riches.

Faith is the cross upon which unreality dies and the true and eternal realities are revealed.

"Thou say'st, 'Take up thy Cross,'
O man, and follow Me!
The night is black, the feet are slack,
Yet we would follow Thee.

"But, O dear Lord, we cry
That we Thy face could see,
Thy blessed face, one moment's space —
Then we might follow Thee!

THE HARDSHIP OF FAITH

"O heavy Cross — of faith
In what we cannot see!
As once of yore, Thyself restore
And help to follow Thee.

"If not as once Thou cam'st
In true humanity,
Come yet as Guest within the breast
That burns to follow Thee.

"Within our heart of hearts
In nearest nearness be;
Set up Thy throne within Thine own;
Go, Lord: we follow Thee."

MEMORIAL DAY

And it came to pass after these things, that Joshua, the son of Nun, the servant of the Lord, died, being an hundred and ten years old.

And they buried him in the border of his inheritance in Timnath-serah, which is in Mount Ephraim, on the north side of the hill of Gaash.

And Israel served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that overlived Joshua, and which had known all the works of the Lord that He had done for Israel.

JOSHUA XXIV. 29–31.

MEMORIAL DAY[1]

The going forth of Israel from Egypt and their settlement in Caanan was a revolutionary event whose results reach down to the distant shores of our own time. Great ideas were born with the birth of that little nation, ideas which have had a mighty influence in the world. To say nothing of the religious principles which have descended through Israel as a heritage for mankind, it is of special interest to us at present to recall the fact that the idea of a genuine nationality was first incarnated in the Hebrew people.

The world of the days of the Exodus might be compared with Europe before the French Revolution. Instead of nations there were

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[1] The author of these sermons is Chaplain of McKinley Post, Grand Army of the Republic. It has been customary for the Post to attend Divine worship at Riverdale on the Sunday preceding Memorial Day. This sermon was preached on one of those occasions.

dynasties. The kings owned their subjects; the mass of the people, who were often of diverse races, were little better than slaves. The armies of these empires were composed of members of a military caste, and wars were affairs of the rulers.

Do we understand what it meant to that ancient world when the people of Israel became lost to view in the deserts of Sinai? Do we realize what a revolutionary force was let loose? Here was a people without an earthly king, owning allegiance to Almighty God alone; a people without an aristocracy, whose humblest member was by right of birth a son of Israel and therefore a full citizen; a people whose army was composed of all its able-bodied men!

And the discipline of those forty wilderness years — the severely simple life, the stern regimen of spiritual, moral, and physical training — was making this people a nation knit together in all its parts, a true commonwealth, a social organism of living brotherhood, and a nation of such soldiers as the world of that day

had never yet seen. The national armies of modern times, such armies as those of our Civil War, had their prototype in the embattled host of Israel.

Our text, with its mingled note of pride and pathos, describes a moment in the history of Israel which corresponds to that in which we are now living. The wars which won Canaan and a country for the nation are past. Joshua, the incomparable leader, dies. There are elders who survive him, who were perhaps mere boys when they stood in the ranks of the nation's victorious army. Now they are veterans, and they remember; they have known all the works of the Lord that He has done for Israel.

Can we not see the similitude between these comrades of Joshua and that Grand Army of which we are the rapidly waning remnant? The similitude does not end here. These veterans recall the days of old. In memory they live over again their battles and victories; but through the memory runs an undertone of solemn reminder to generations yet to come,

—a warning that the mighty impulse whence those victories came, the impulse which alone can give future victories, may easily be lost. "And Israel served the Lord all the days of Joshua; and all the days of the elders [the veterans] who overlived Joshua, which had known all the works of the Lord that He had done for Israel."

Would to God it might be so with us! Would to God the veterans of our Grand Army might be such witnesses holding up high and effective example of godliness and faithfulness to the younger men of our time!

I believe we do feel such an obligation resting upon us. We feel it more keenly than the world outside our own ranks can understand. And if our influence is not all we could wish there are solemn reasons for the seeming failure. Our Civil War was terribly destructive of life; the sacrifices called for were extreme, and in the nature of the case they were to a sad extent the sacrifice of our best, our bravest, our noblest young men.

No small part of the pathos of our Memorial

season is the fact — a fact which we veterans know too well — that we who survive are not the best of those who with us went forth to battle.

We are justly proud of our association with those heroic souls who so freely gave themselves and their lives; we esteem it a high and a sufficient honor that we stood shoulder to shoulder with them and strove honestly, as they did, to give our nation's cause full meed of faithful service. But when memory brings back their faces, we know that among the comrades who fell at our side were many who could ill be spared; whose lives, had they lived, would have been an invaluable reinforcement to the cause of God and our country.

There is another reason why the impulse which sustained the nation in its dark hour has waned, — as the similar impulse was evidently waning at the time when Joshua died. And that reason is now, as it was then, the success of the cause for which we battled.

The people of this country did not thoroughly become an undivided and complete

nation until after the victorious termination of the Civil War. And then the consolidation of the country into one mighty nationality reaching from the Atlantic to the Pacific, from the Lakes to the Gulf, ushered in a period of unexampled material prosperity. Ever since the war the people of this country have been so busy with business, so drunk with the excitement of great industrial and financial enterprises, — and latterly so absorbed in spending the wealth created, that it has been hard indeed for any voice of high moral or spiritual endeavor to make itself heard.

A reaction has come at last, and not a moment too soon. A wave of reform has overspread the land; a public conscience is apparently aroused.

But even this awakening has its dangers, one of the most evident of which is that a vicarious conscience is a cheap and often a frightfully mischievous possession. It costs nothing; it is often positively pleasurable, and also most morally deadening, to indulge in spasms of conscience for other people, and

gloat over the exposure of sins from which we ourselves have been mercifully preserved.

More than any reform of abuses, we need, in this land of ours, a revival of personal repentance which shall make every man feel the burden of his own sins, and make us, each for himself, humbly willing to return to God and seek His righteousness.

Perhaps it may be wholesome to look backward at things as they were, as some of us well remember them on the eve of the Civil War. No one can reasonably pretend that those older times were faultless. Politics were far from being pure; political controversies were full of peculiar bitterness, even the prevailing religiousness of the people of that day was not without its taint of conventionality and lack of true Christian brotherhood. And yet, recalling the days immediately preceding the war and comparing them with the present time, we can see that certain things were present then which now we sorely lack.

Political issues rightly apprehended are always moral issues. But the political questions

of that period were such that they were clearly seen and vividly felt as moral questions. And what is of more consequence, the moral earnestness, the religious fervor needful for meeting those issues dwelt deeply in the minds and hearts of the people. The questions before the people involved the right or wrong of human slavery, and back of that they involved the very life of the Republic.

Not only were these questions large and vital, but their largeness and their living force were so evident that no one could escape their impact. And the mass of the people had neither wish nor thought of escaping the responsibilities of the hour.

I said, a moral earnestness and a religious fervor were present in the minds and hearts of the people. I wonder if any of us remember the religious revival which swept the land in 1857 and the following years? Very different from anything which is now called "a revival" was that tidal wave of spiritual awakening. There were no evangelists, few or none of the meetings were advertised, no patent methods

were employed, but a strange power spread from church to church, from one community to another. There was little outward excitement, and no effort made to produce either excitement or sensation. But the impression was deep, solemn, searching. I think it rested chiefly upon regular churchgoers, — though this would not mean what it means to-day, because non-churchgoers in that time were few and far between.

That spiritual impulse formed the character and remained deep and strong in the breasts of a multitude of young men who a few years later were to be found in the ranks of our armies; and it helped to color the thoughts and feelings and purposes of the people generally.

The Revival of 1857 was but one of the fervid impulses of that time. Every one knows something of the deeply religious tone of the Abolitionist propaganda, even when it came into conflict with established orthodoxies. The very politics of the time took a tone of more than worldly importance. The Kansas-

Nebraska controversy touched the deepest feeling of the whole country. I well remember how a pastor of a large congregation drew upon himself the bitter criticism of a minority, and awakened the enthusiasm of the mass of his people, by proposing from his pulpit a subscription to buy Sharp's rifles to arm the Free State men in Kansas.

The first Lincoln campaign was like a crusade with its strong enthusiasm, and its processions of "Wide Awakes" with their torches and semi-uniforms. Many a boy learned enough military drill in those processions to be of good service to him a few months later; and over and above the drill he drank deeply of that solemn, that almost religious spirit which he carried with him into the army when he became a soldier.

In its turn, this moral, this religious fervor was aided by the prevailing simplicity of life. There were comparatively few rich men, and the richest of them would scarcely be counted wealthy to-day. There was little luxury even in well-to-do homes. The amusements after

which people run so madly to-day were either unknown or they were frowned upon. Life was serious: at least, it was serious compared with the life of to-day.

You, comrades, remember how largely the ranks of our armies were filled with boys. It is a fact shown by the records that the largest number of enlistments were at the age of eighteen, — which, as we well know, often meant seventeen or even sixteen. Is this to be accounted for on the score of mere youthful enthusiasm or boyish love of adventure? We who remember, we who perhaps were ourselves boys when we enlisted, would scarcely accept such an explanation. We know that the boys still went into the army after the first enthusiasm had cooled and the grim nature of the business of war had become sadly evident. It would be nearer the mark to say that the temper of that time matured men early. There was a vein of sternness in that time; the sense of duty and of responsibility grew early in young hearts.

And yet, paradoxical as it may seem, the

boys remained boys, with the freshness and light-heartedness of youth, even after manhood overtook them. The simplicity of their upbringing had not prematurely robbed life of its bloom. In a double sense our Grand Army was an army of boys. We called each other, our officers called us, "Boys." And that elastic spirit of youth carried us through hardship and suffering, and made us cheerful in the midst of ghastly peril, as no moulding of ironclad drill could have done. But underneath all the youthful light-heartedness the sense of duty, the stern devotion to the cause, the high consent to sacrifice remained; and the brightest examples were often seen in those youngest in years.

Such a war as ours was an awful use for the devotion of such young manhood: only a supreme emergency could justify it. But men felt that the very life of the nation was at stake; and the stern temper of the time not only justified the sacrifice but glorified it. The young man who in that crisis stayed at home did not save his life; he risked the

losing of that self-respect which is the sweetest thing in life. The young lives given for God and country were the lives truly saved.

Their memory has become a precious treasure, a heritage for future years. Our Memorial Day is the reminder of it. And we have need to recall the spirit of the time out of which our Grand Army arose in order to catch the true spirit and the real sacredness of this Memorial season.

A comparison between the times and the impulses out of which our Nation's greatest sacrifices were made and the times in which we are now living ought also to be profitable for its present-day lesson.

Let us frankly admit that there was much in that older period which we would not wish to call back again. Let us thankfully acknowledge that the world has made a great advance during the almost half a century which has gone by. Let us bless God that the sacrifices, the blood and tears of the generation of our youth have not been in vain.

And yet we cannot but wish that the higher

and finer elements of that life of a former day might be revived and perpetuated. We pay a ruinous price for material prosperity if we pay in terms of cheapened conscience, or loss of the sense of spiritual values, or deadened fear of God. We are buying the increased luxuries and comforts of life very dearly if they are costing us a lessened willingness for sacrifice and a dulled sense of personal responsibility. Even advance in culture and in knowledge can never compensate for a weakened moral power, a debilitated sense of duty, a shrinking from the hard or terrible tasks of manhood.

For such a nation as ours, where the only real sovereign is the People, a certain sternness in the purpose and tone of life is a condition of salvation. And this must be, first of all, a sternness toward ourselves, a holding of our individual selves up to the measure of high principle and readiness for sacrifice. Character in the citizens is of far more importance in this Republic than material wealth or even than the comforts of life.

We who know what it was at its best, cannot but feel that a breath of the spirit of the early sixties would be of inestimable value to our country to-day. But God forbid that we should doubt that the spirit of duty is still alive in our land, even though to us it may seem to sleep.

When the writer of the Book of Joshua said that "Israel served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders who overlived Joshua," he apparently felt, as perhaps we may feel to-day, that the early devotion had paled, and the impulse of the great days of the past had spent itself. But if he could have looked into the future he would have seen greater glories for Israel and higher service than any he had dreamed of.

And this is our faith for our country. We cannot believe that the sacrifices of the past shall have been in vain; we trust the Almighty One who led us through the Red Sea of the nation's great trial. We believe His spirit is still with us, and that whenever

new crises arise, He will sift us and purify us, and put into us a new spirit of devotion to duty fit for the need of the hour.

Comrades! the fellowship of our Order is unique. The tie that binds us is no artificial tie, nor any social convention. It is the vital tie of the memory and the brotherhood of a great service in which we shared a common life and faced a common death. And we remember that we are the survivors of a great sacrifice. We feel toward each other as I think scarce any other band of men can feel. In all brotherhood and frankness then, let us ask ourselves, "Is the higher and more sacred spirit of the sacrifice and service which we commemorate alive in our hearts? Are we taking our orders from the Great Captain of our Salvation? Are we living according to His commands?"

Our ranks are fast thinning with the fleeting years.

> "Part of our host has crossed the flood,
> And part is crossing now."

Memorial Day will soon include us in its memories and then "May we all be received into that Grand Army above, where Thou, O God, art the Great Commander."

THE BREAD QUESTION

And when His disciples were come to the other side, they had forgotten to take bread.

Then said Jesus unto them, Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees.

And they reasoned among themselves, saying, It is because we have taken no bread.

MATTHEW xvi. 5–7.

THE BREAD QUESTION

Churchly tradition may swathe the Apostles in an atmosphere of religious unreality and clothe them in uniforms of official sainthood, but the Gospels show us something different. The Gospels are alive with elemental humanity; they tell of disciples who were men of like passions with ourselves. Do we not know just how they felt when they said, "It is because we took no bread" — because we forgot!

Have we not felt the sudden blankness, the vexation with ourselves, the miserable sense of petty shame when we have discovered that we have forgotten?

But when we understand why the disciples forgot to take bread, then the story grows upon us; we begin to feel its touch of tragedy. Not simple carelessness or inattention caused the forgetfulness, but poignant sympathy with their Master.

In company with Him they had just passed through a stormy scene. Certain Pharisees and Sadducees, a committee sent from the seat of government, had been investigating Jesus, prying with no friendly intent into His orthodoxy, asking — and the asking had a threat in it — for a sign from heaven to prove His right to teach and work mighty works.

With cutting severity Jesus had rebuked his inquisitors. He had refused to be judged by them. He said to them, "A wicked and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign, and there shall no sign be given unto it but the sign of the prophet Jonas." And then he left them and departed.

Perhaps you can put yourselves in the disciples' place, and with them feel the agitation of that moment. When they stepped into the boat to carry Jesus across the lake, they were starting on no picnic party. Even such a necessary as bread went clean out of mind. And no wonder! They were just human.

And now their human nature shows itself in a fresh way. They prove themselves children

of their day, moulded by the opinion of their time and their race. To accept bread from a person was confession of fellowship with him. It was, to say the least, awkward to accept bread from an enemy. When Jesus said, "Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees," he seemed to them to say, "You have forgotten to take bread. We must now run the risk of going hungry. After what has passed we cannot accept bread from either Pharisees or Sadducees." And they did what men in all ages have done, — they interpreted the words of Jesus according to the ideas of their time, and thereby they took themselves as far away as possible from His actual meaning. Jesus, when He spoke, was thinking of one thing; and the disciples, as they listened, imagined that they heard Him say another and quite a different thing. They thought he was rebuking their forgetfulness of that which seems the most practical and pressing of all things in our earthly life.

The Bread Question is always with us. It lies at the bottom of all the work and business

and enterprise of this world. The great financial problems, always so pressing and often so threatening, are, after all, only phases of the Bread Question.

All the activities of human life are set in motion and kept going by the necessity of daily food. When the bare necessity is satisfied, what is left over goes toward those comforts and luxuries which make up the material side of civilization. But in spite of the comfort and luxury so much in evidence in the world of our day, it is still true that a large proportion of mankind live close to actual want. The Bread Question still comes home to multitudes directly and by no round-about way.

If human nature could be changed so that food were no longer needed, if the Bread Question could be wiped off the slate of human life, society would be revolutionized from top to bottom. An inconceivable change would be wrought in the whole life of the world.

As it is, the Bread Question is not only

always with us, but constantly it thrusts itself upon us as though it were the most serious of all human questions.

Jesus' treatment of the Bread Question is most remarkable. At first sight He appears to minimize its importance; in fact, He seems impatient, almost contemptuous, of the Bread Question. We hear Him say, "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth." "Take no thought what ye shall eat." We recall His parable, so scornful of the man whose bursting barns contained provision for many years. And now we hear Him rebuking His disciples because they could imagine that He cared for such a trifle as forgetfulness to take bread.

But a little reflection will quickly dispel the hasty, first impression. Jesus neither ignored nor belittled the Bread Question. On the contrary, He asserted its large importance. In the same breath in which He forbade anxiety concerning bodily wants He declared, "Your Heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of these things." He commands us to "seek

first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you."

Again the first impression is that Jesus, though He may yield a certain importance to the Bread Question, puts it and all that goes with it in subordinate place, and bids us regard it only as an humble second consideration in the management of our lives. And again the first impression misses the largeness of the teaching of Jesus.

His teaching is, in reality, startling. He denies that we have anything to do with the Bread Question. He asserts that it never was, and never can be, a concern of ours. He does not make it subordinate to other questions, but He teaches that it is out of our reach and none of our business. He lifts the Bread Question up into the almighty care of Divine Power and Divine Love.

The practical things for us, so Jesus teaches, are not worry over or planning for the wherewithal we shall be fed. The things that lie within our power of planning and doing are

the things of the Kingdom of God and His righteousness.

And is not this absolutely true? Bread is made of grain. Does the farmer make the grain? Does he even, in any true sense, "grow" the grain? But what does he do? He tries to learn the laws — God's laws — of the growth of grain, and then he conforms his doing and his work to those laws.

But with his seed selection and his fertilizer and his cultivation does he not help nature — or God? No! He does but seek deeper into the Kingdom of God. Not one single thing can he do outside the Kingdom of God, with its laws of life and growth. In faithful seeking and righteous obedience he works and waits for a result which God alone can give.

Men make discoveries or inventions. What are these but seeking the Kingdom of God? Wireless telegraphy, for example. Has Marconi made anything new? No! He and others have by right seeking discovered certain facts concerning one of the most awful and spiritual forces of the universe; they have

discovered attributes of electricity which, applied in the right way, according to the laws of God's Kingdom, enable us to speak to each other through the air across seas and continents.

In such a prosy, apparently unspiritual business as banking there are laws, not all of which are in the statute books, but principles of mathematical and eternal justice and righteousness that must be sought, known, and obeyed on penalty of failure in the business.

If we could follow out the teaching of Jesus, we should find it true in every department of human work, — in the highest and most complex, in the most far-reaching and daring enterprises of human industry as truly as in the most simple. We make a wretched and damaging mistake when we imagine that the Kingdom of God reigns only in the religious emotions. The Kingdom of God governs all our doing in this world. It concerns itself with every man's daily life and business, with the work of the farmer and the mechanic and the financier alike. We must seek out and conform ourselves to the law of nature in the

world and man if we would accomplish anything worth our doing. And what we call the "law of nature" is but a clumsy name for the Law of the Kingdom of God. The results of our work are imperfect because we do not know all the ways of the Kingdom.

And there is a blessing in our very ignorance. It compels us to seek, and the seeking develops our powers. More than that, seeking the right way to do what must be done brings us near Our Father. Seeking the right way to do the things given us to do in our daily work is seeking the righteousness of God. And doing a thing in the right way because it is right is seeking first His Kingdom, whether the thing to be done is a piece of carpenter work or a great financial transaction.

But when we think more of the wages we hope to receive than of the honesty of our work, when we set our minds upon the other things to be added unto us and employ our seeking in a grasping effort to anticipate these things, then we meddle with the Bread Question; we tamper with the order of the King-

dom of God, and our fingers are sure to be burnt. Then, for our very salvation, God sends us trouble, warning us away from the danger zone on which we are trespassing.

We are emerging from the whirl of a strange and destructive panic, a panic which appeared to be absolutely without reason. The country was rich as it never had been before in all that makes for worldly wealth. Crops had been good during a succession of years. We were at peace with the world. Endless enterprises demanded the employment of the industry of all the people. And all at once things went to pieces. Rich men were made poor, and many who had been comfortable were doomed to want and suffering.

Of course, various causes for the panic are assigned. Blame is visited on this or that man or set of men. There are theories in plenty, as naturally there must be. But ask yourself now! If instead of that covetous grasping after pay before it is due, which has poisoned the lives of our people rich and poor alike; if, instead of meddling with the Bread

Question, the people of this land had had their minds set upon faithfully doing the work God gave them to do, and their hearts set upon doing it righteously because it was their Father's work, — would the disaster have come! If men in the workshops had cared most of all for honest workmanship, and men in the market-place had held the justice of human brotherhood high above personal advantage, would there have been any panic, and would this country and this people have been the poorer for seeking first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness?

A curious product of meddling with the Bread Question is a state of mind which can only be described as a mental and moral laziness. It may seem absurd to suggest anything like laziness as a fault of the intense activity of our time. But the anticipative temper which reaches after results before they are earned, is scarcely conducive to thinking things out with honest thoroughness of mental pains. The patient labor needed in searching out right ways in business or public affairs, the bright

willingness for righteous tasks which do not promise to be quickly paying, is not congenial when we have accustomed ourselves to dabbling with the easier, though dangerous things which are none of our business. May it not be possible that our pride in our "push" and "hustle," and our boast of our facility in getting things done, is, after all, little more than the garrulity of a mental laziness unwilling to set itself to the task of working out the sum of future consequences?

And this mental laziness, which is itself an immorality, begets the deeper sin of moral laziness. When we begin to see that things are working themselves out unrighteously, it requires an effort not too willingly made to pause in the gait we have grown used to, and check our inertia, and set ourselves to seeking first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness.

The tangles of our affairs, the waste of our resources, the troubles of our times, have probably come not so much from deliberate wickedness as from unwillingness to face the pains and

costs of right thinking and right doing. And if the check to our prosperity shall compel us to stop our selfish, ineffectual, and perilous meddling with the Bread Question and turn our activities into channels where they may safely and righteously run, then we shall have reason to thank God for His Fatherly judgments.

The Lord Jesus did not belittle the Bread Question. Far from it. In that mighty work of His which all the four Evangelists describe, in that Sacrament of the Loaves when Jesus fed the five thousand, He was showing us the Father. He was renewing on the Galilean hillside God's primal pledge of provision for the earthly needs of His earthly children.

Agitated by the conflict between their Master and the agents of the rulers, the disciples forgot to take bread. Jesus bids them beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees. They imagine He is blaming them for not taking care of the Bread Question. But listen to His answer to their foolish fears: "Oh ye of little faith! Why reason ye among

yourselves because ye have brought no bread? Do ye not yet understand neither remember the five loaves of the five thousand and how many baskets ye took up? Neither the seven loaves of the four thousand and how many baskets ye took up? How is it that ye do not understand that I spake it not concerning bread that ye should beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees?"

No! Jesus neither belittled nor ignored the Bread Question. He lifted it up and showed these disciples and us that the Bread Question is not ours because it belongs to God. He taught them, and He teaches us, that this question so near our very lives rests safe under the pledge of Almighty Power and Love.

Jesus brought the disciples back from their useless anxieties to the real and practical things, to the questions within the power of their answering. He made them face the question of their own conduct under the stress of an actual and immediate temptation.

The leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees is the corrupting germ which spir-

itual presumption insinuates into the most intimate relations between God and His children. Its root is the same foolish belief in human ability to provide daily bread; but the belief has grown arrogant. It assumes that men can provide their own spiritual food. The leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees thrust itself upon the appetites and the necessities of men in that day, and therefore Jesus anxiously warns his disciples.

The Pharisees were orthodox in doctrine, strict in religious observance, earnest in faith and practice. But their religion was an end and not a means. They worshipped worship, they served service, they were zealous for an artificial "law." Their very earnestness became a self-deceit. Without realizing what they were doing they were actually worshipping worship and service and the law, instead of worshipping God. Their religion had become a vast snare of insincerities.

The Sadducees are less distinctly etched upon the gospel page, but we see them as sceptics concerning the resurrection and the

larger life beyond this world. We catch an impression of them as men scornful of sacred things, contemptuous of moral scruples, haughty, self-sufficient. The Sadducees were members of the High Priest's party, — the worldly, intriguing, power-grasping party in the Jewish nation. Pretending to believe in God, affecting reverence for the simple Law of Moses, their real God was success, and their real worship was the worship of worldly wealth and luxury.

We hear the voice of Jesus saying, "Take heed, beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees!" Does His word sound like some far-off cry against sins of ancient Jews? Or do we recognize the universal note which echoes always from the words of Jesus?

You can have the essence of Phariseeism without its phylacteries and its solemn robes. When religion becomes a conventionality instead of a Godliness; when the Church sinks into the place of a mere institution sufficient unto itself, and the manner of the preacher's preaching, or the order of the service, or the

style of the music, or the working of the wheels of "church work" becomes The Thing Itself, taking God's place, — what is that but the leaven of the Pharisees?

And this cold belief in the adequacy of worldly resources for the work of Christ's Church, this presumptuous assumption of the ability of human knowledge to settle all questions about the truth of God, this narrowing of men's horizon to the limits of passing things on this little earth, this practical materialism which corrodes the lives and character even of God's own children, — what is that but the leaven of the Sadducees?

Religion, by itself, is a negative thing. Religion is good when it is content to serve in the temple of our souls; when it humbly lights the lamp of God's truth and opens the windows to let in the sunshine of His love. Religion is an awful mockery, a hollow emptiness, nay, a corrupt and corrupting thing, when it hides God with its own pretentious bulk.

And this world, God's world, this expression of Himself, full of reflections of His

Truth and Beauty, and full of the wondrous working of His righteous Law! — When men grasp the outside things of God's world and claim them for their own, and quarrel for the very husks and shells of the world, and fling on high the dust made by their destructive tramplings until they hide God behind its foul cloud, — what treason is that!

When Christ's disciples partake of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees, can you wonder if men stand aloof from His Church and with cold disdain refuse to listen to her call?

The passion of the soul of Jesus is a passion for sincerity, for reality. His warning cry is sure to sound out against anything that threatens to hide our vision of God. With all the mighty desire of His Holy Soul He longs to bring us simply, clearly, face to face with Our Father.

And it is plain common-sense to affirm that for our country, for the world, for your soul and mine, this is a more practical matter than the finding of our daily bread. Because, neces-

sary as our daily bread is, the providing of it is taken out of our hands. We hunt windmills when we imagine we can do it for ourselves.

But this other thing, this gaining clear vision and getting into right relations with Our Father, *is* within our power. This is the work God has given us to do. His Spirit waits to aid us; and on our doing of this, on our seeking first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, everything else depends.

In this world, which is God's world and an expression of His love and law and truth, you, a child of God, cannot live happily or safely while you hide yourself, or allow mere things or men's opinions to hide you from Him.

May He send abroad His Mighty Spirit of Truth with power, to open our eyes and bring us to repentance for our sin and folly!

THE MYSTERY OF TIME

Lord, Thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations.

Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever Thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, Thou art God.

Thou turnest man to destruction; and sayest, Return, ye children of men.

For a thousand years in Thy sight are but as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night. — PSALM XC. 1–4.

THE MYSTERY OF TIME

The Ninetieth is the most sublime of all the Psalms. The other Psalms have a beauty of their own, but none of them equal the majesty of this Prayer of Moses, the Man of God.

The Ninetieth is also one of the most familiar of the Psalms. It commonly forms part of the funeral service. And the reason why it is thus used is not because of its melancholy, but because it so powerfully lifts our thought and feeling away from the fleeting, passing things of earth up to God's eternity and the calm hope that glows in His unchanging love. For a similar reason this Psalm is also appropriate for such a season as the New Year.

There is something not only solemn but agitating in the period made by the New Year. The New Year's day divides the past from the present; it draws a sharp line between the has been and the may be. It compels us to

think of what is gone forever; it brings us face to face with the unknown possibilities of what is to come.

Every new day does this; each night when we lie down to rest marks something that has slipped away beyond our grasp, and each morning sunrise opens a new unwritten and unknown chapter in our lives. The New Year does the same thing, only in a larger and therefore more searching and disturbing manner. It compels us to think, not simply of yesterday, but of a whole year of yesterdays past and gone. Few of us can look back over a year of yesterdays without being reminded of things that have made a difference in our lives.

The new year also compels us to look forward, not simply toward to-morrow, but into the unknown possibilities of three hundred and sixty-five to-morrows. It matters little that no vision of ours can pierce those morrows; the very fact of the New Year projects the shadow of these morrows before our faces. We wish each other a Happy New Year. It

is a good, a kindly wish; yet the wishing of it is a confession that the New Year contains possibilities beyond our power to reach with anything more than kindly wishes. The New Year brings us face to face with the ever present Mystery of Time. Ordinarily we live in the present, and it is well for us that we must do so. Our duties, our work in life require our presence in the present. But it is a mistake to depreciate the past, and a greater mistake to be unmindful of the future.

The past is our school — or, rather, it is our library of reference stored with lessons of experience. The future contains our hopes. All growth and advancement belongs to the future. What we are, is carried into the future along with all the possibilities of what we may become. Both past and present take their meaning from what is before us in the future.

It is right to live *in* the present. To live only *for* the present is narrow and debasing. There are those who try to do so, and they shrivel their own souls thereby. But no human being ever really succeeds in living in the fleeting

present. The yesterdays and the to-morrows leave their mark upon us all. Our life is, after all, in the yesterdays and the to-morrows; the present is never anything more than a moving point. To-day is the future of yesterday and the past of to-morrow. And this is the Mystery of Time. The most energetic, the most fiercely, impatiently busy man cannot hurry time; the most indolent cannot stay time. With unvarying rhythm, with remorseless, unhurried, yet ceaseless tread time carries us all onward. We never "have time"; time forever has us, and holds us in an iron grip whether we will or no. There is something infinitely wearying, yea, terrifying in the ceaseless successions of time. The restlessness, the fever and the fret of life, its uncertainties, its anxieties, are all the inevitable result of the dealing of Time with us. But the very restlessness and weariness are an instinctive revolt of our souls against the tyranny of Time; they are the cry of a life within our life which is not an ever moving point.

The regrets and the longings with which we

come to a period like that of the new year; the hopes and fears which mark time so distinctly, which bring us so sharply face to face with its mysteries; the protest against Time which the new year raises in our soul, — are evidences of a spirit working in us with a power of liberty larger than Time can hold.

And this brings us back to our text, "Lord, Thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations." Perhaps, when Moses wrote this, he was thinking of the way in which God had always been with His people Israel. But if that was all his thought, then he wrote larger than he knew. I do not believe it could have been all his thought; he does not say, "God has always been with us"; he says, We have always been in God. "*Thou* hast been our dwelling-place." Our life is in Thee. And who is He in whom we have our dwelling-place? He is not a child of Time: "Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever Thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, Thou art God."

In contrast are we, children of Time. "Thou

turnest man to destruction and sayest, Return, ye children of men."

John Calvin has a wonderful comment upon this verse. He says: "The Psalmist compares the course of our life to a ring; because God placing us upon earth turneth us about in a narrow compass, and when we come to the last point of our life, then plucketh He us back to Himself in a moment."

He is our dwelling-place in all generations, — He, the Eternal One who was, before the mountains were brought forth. He places us in the ring of Time, whence we return into His Eternity.

The restlessness which we experience in Time is not wholly Time's work with us; it is not simply the weariness of the hurry of fleeting days and quickly recurring new years. It is the revolt of a nature meant for something else; it is the protest of a life whose real home is in the bosom of God and His Eternity.

Sometimes we hear things said which seem to imply that the activities of our life belong to this world, and the hoped-for rest at the

close of earthly life, a sort of everlasting indolence. This is far from what is either taught or implied in Holy Scripture.

God is not idle. God is the Great Doer. But His doing is different from the feverish haste of the doing which belongs to Time. With Him, "A thousand years are like yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night."

We, with our limitations, must speak of eternity in terms of time. The text is an illustration, but what an illustration! How near are the past and gone yesterdays, how brief their hours seem as we look back upon them! We lose the sense of duration when we look backward. Days that are gone seem like moments. In God's sight, in His looking backward, a thousand years are like yesterday when it is past. They are like a flash of memory! They are like a watch in the night. Now, that is a Hebrew phrase for an hour of the night, an hour passed in sleep. Did you ever notice how you will sometimes wake up from a dream in which you seem to have passed through

hours or even days of action, and as you wake you hear the clock strike, and you discover that your dream was really an affair of only a few moments when measured by time? Or, perhaps, healthily tired, you fall sound asleep, and when you are awakened by the rays of the morning sun streaming in at your window, you feel as though it were only an hour ago that you laid yourself down upon your bed. In the night watches we lose the sense of duration. Sleep is a foretaste of the mystery of eternity cast across the Mystery of Time.

The illustration in the Psalm is indeed in terms of time, with its thousand years like past and gone yesterday, and its watch in the night; but an illustration in temporal terms so chosen as to make us understand that these years of God's Eternity are like the things which though in Time are most unlike Time; like the yesterdays and the night watches in which the sense of successive hours and minutes becomes blurred and almost lost. God is a Doer, but His doing is not hampered and hindered by Time's successive rhythms.

Now the active use of our powers is not, in itself, a weariness. What wearies and wears is partly our blindness, which makes our doing a series of anxious and uncertain experiments; and even more the fact that, blind as we are, we must also work against the cruel, remorseless march of Time.

One of the regrets of the new year's period is that the old year has gone, leaving so many things unfinished or undone, — not always because of our neglect, but because our powers were too feeble to grasp and conquer our opportunities while we remained bound in the ring of Time.

If our powers were developed, if our souls were but free to use their powers unhindered, if we could but see clearly and work without hurry, what joy, what exultation would be ours! What rest, not in idleness, but in highest, most glorious, most intense doing!

This noblest of blessings is ours in foretaste, and shall, when our childhood in time is accomplished, be ours in full, because the Eternal God is ours and we are His. He is our

dwelling-place in all generations; our life is hid with Him in whose sight a thousand years are like yesterday when it is past and as a watch in the night.

The discipline of Time is ours now, for a little while, with its passing old and its coming new years. Part of the discipline is the withheld knowledge of the full meaning of its process. Time has its mysteries as hard to fathom — yea, even harder to penetrate than those of eternity. The things we know as really alive, and great because alive, are not things of Time. Truth, righteousness, love, beauty, are the bright children of Eternity, too large for Time to hold, too splendid in their living power for Time to measure; yet even here in Time these visitants from Eternity are the realities which alone give life a worthy meaning.

We can see this much of the meaning of the discipline of Time; we can see that it must consist in living out these principles of eternal life in the midst of passing things of earthly days and years. The discipline of Time is a training in reality, a test which tries our souls.

To seek for truth, to strive after righteousness, to learn the experience and the practice of the love of God, to live the eternal life in the midst of the hurry of the ring of Time, — this is not easy, but this must be the instinct and the ambition of every child of God who knows his Father.

The new year is often treated as though it were a new beginning, when we write a new date. Some magic seems to divide the affairs of 19— from the affairs of 19—. And we talk about turning over a new leaf; we make resolutions. But in reality there is no new leaf to turn over. There is no past to bury nor any new beginning to be made. The new year is just a point in the ring of Time, — an imaginary point, if you will; and the advantage to be had from it is that it brings sharply, clearly before our minds both the known meaning and also the solemn mystery of Time, and compels us to look beyond Time into that immeasurable Eternity toward which Time is swiftly bearing us.

The new year may be made useful if we

take it as a point from which to measure ourselves and test the effect of the discipline of Time upon our souls.

Are we better men and women than we were last year, — sweeter in disposition, purer in heart, more patient under the trials of our lives? Do we care more for truth? Have we gained a deeper love for God and a clearer vision of Him? Have we an increased hunger and thirst after righteousness? Are we more unselfish? Is the power of this passing world of Time growing less, and the power of the beauty of the Lord our God growing stronger within us?

The sweet hope of a Happy New Year to come would be ours if we could answer "Yes" to such questions as these; or if our nearest friends, who know us best, could answer for us and say, "Yes; there has been growth in his soul, in her life."

And the reason why such an answer would be the surest pledge of a Happy New Year is that the discipline of Time does not end with the old year, or begin with the new, but it

goes right on, year by year, week by week, day by day, hour by hour, minute by minute. The spiritual gains of the past year will be carried over into the coming year, and the spiritual losses also.

Perhaps we dare not try to reckon our gains, perhaps we fear to face our losses; or it may be that we know them so mingled that we cannot disentangle them. We hope we may have gained, we are conscious that in many things we have come short.

So Moses, the man of God, must have felt when he wrote this Psalm. Through it all the thought of God's eternity is set over against the mournful consciousness of human sin and frailty, and the agonized prayer of the Psalmist is: "So teach us to number our days that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom! Return, O Lord, how long, and let it repent Thee concerning Thy servants!"

His thought comes back to God; but this time he claims, not the clearing of the mystery of Him in whom we dwell, — this time he pleads for the mercy which descends out of

the Person of the Eternal One to us who are still living in Time: "O satisfy us early with Thy mercy, that we may rejoice and be glad all our days."

And in his vision, as an answer to his prayer, the very pain of the discipline of Time begins to glow with Eternal Love: "Make us glad according to the days wherein Thou hast afflicted us, and the years wherein we have seen evil." Bring us around in the ring of Time through its trials into the light and glory of the full life of Him who is our dwelling-place. And then, like the spiritual glory of the sunset glow after a day of storm, the Psalm closes with a vision of splendor:

"Let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us, and establish Thou the work of our hands upon us; yea, the work of our hands establish Thou it."

If we have found God, if we know Him, if we are resting in Him who is our eternal dwelling-place, then, as we wish each other a Happy New Year, our wish, our hope, projects itself beyond the uncertainties of the

future of Time into the Presence of the unchanging glory of the Beauty of the Lord our God, and in the vision of that sure hope we know that no vicissitudes of Time can wreck us; we know that through the very discipline of the mystery Time, through its trials and its darkness, God's work is being done in us, and we are sure that at last the work of our hands shall be established upon us.

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DATE LOANED	BORROWER'S NAME	DATE RETURNED
	Mend	✓
Memorial day tr.		✓
5/30	S Pratt	
8/7/44	Davis, H W	
9-17-49	E R Arm	